



USAID
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

ENVIRONMENTAL AND NATURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK



“Environment-related matters are more important than ever in the work of USAID. Our investments in sustainable environmental stewardship aren’t only about protecting the environment—they also help build healthier populations, preserve livelihoods, and create new economic opportunities.”

—Mark Green, USAID Administrator

In July 2019, Administrator Mark Green launched the Environmental and Natural Resource Management Framework for the U.S Agency for International Development (USAID). It will serve as an Agency-wide guiding document to ensure USAID investments in all sectors bring environmental considerations to the forefront. Administrator Green emphasized that sound stewardship of natural resources has implications for nearly everything we are trying to help our governments, civil society, and the private sector in our partner countries achieve on the Journey to Self-Reliance.

The ENRM Framework is written as a guiding document to staff at missions and headquarters across sectors. The Framework is designed to give USAID staff:

- A **vision for integration** of investments in environmental and natural resource management with economic growth and social development;
- A set of **cross-sectoral environmental priorities** in line with the National Security Strategy and the USAID Policy Framework;
- Awareness of the **two priority areas and six sub-priorities** for USAID investment across sectors; and,
- A set of **cross-cutting programmatic approaches** to inform USAID programming and facilitate partner countries’ Journeys to Self-Reliance.

INTRODUCTION

Sound management of environmental and natural resources is integral to a country's development, resilience, and self-reliance. USAID selected “biodiversity and habitat protections” as one of the primary Self-Reliance Metrics because a country's commitment to environmental protection and inclusive management of natural resources is key to advancing a host of broader development goals. Sustainable economic growth that incorporates the responsible use of natural resources and applies environmental safeguards proactively is critical for the Journey to Self-Reliance. Activities such as agriculture, animal husbandry, forestry, fisheries, mining, urbanization, and infrastructure development can have a significant impact on the environment and a country's future, which underlines the need for close integration of environmental and natural-resource management with economic growth and social change.

The United States has provided long-standing and robust financial and technical support through its foreign-assistance programming for environmental and natural-resource management in developing countries. These investments demonstrate American leadership and values abroad not only because they promote self-reliance, but also because their results are critical to global safety and security. In the *2018 Worldwide Threats Assessment*, the Office of the Director of National Intelligence stated, “[T]he impacts of the long-term trends toward a warming climate, more air pollution, biodiversity loss and water scarcity are likely to fuel economic and social discontent—and possibly upheaval—through 2018.” The U.S. Department of State-USAID *Joint Strategic Plan* similarly finds that, “environmental threats such as water scarcity and biodiversity loss can further fuel tensions over much-needed resources,” and identifies environmental management, governance, and resilience as core components of our strategic objective to promote healthy, educated, and productive populations in partner countries to drive inclusive and sustainable development (SO 2.2). Similarly, the prosperity-focused pillar of the President's *National Security Strategy* (NSS) states that, “the United States will remain a global leader in reducing traditional pollution, as well as greenhouse gases,” and, “will continue to advance an approach that balances energy security, economic development, and environmental protection (Pillar II, pg. 22).” The NSS also makes it clear that, in a time of this great power competition, “American-led investments represent the most sustainable and responsible approach to development.”

USAID is committed to supporting governments, civil society, and the private sector in our partner countries on their Journey to Self-Reliance, including through strategic investments in environmental and natural-resource management and the robust integration of environmental protection into our programs. USAID's continued leadership in this sector will ensure more sustainable, country-led, effective, and equitable efforts to protect and manage environmental and natural resources and foster efforts to promote healthy, educated, and productive populations in partner countries. The *Environmental and Natural-Resource Management Framework* responds to global trends and highlights opportunities to strengthen positive linkages in two priority areas: (1) improving natural resource management for self-reliance; and, (2) improving urban systems for a cleaner environment and enhanced human well-being. In alignment with the Agency's *Policy Framework*, the Framework also explicitly identifies approaches to promote country progress; seek sustainable, resilient results; and invest for measurable impact in environmental and natural-resource management.



PHOTO: MONTAKAN TANCHASAWAT FOR USAID

PUTTING THE FRAMEWORK INTO ACTION

USAID's Bureaus, Independent Offices, and Missions should take three broad actions to put this *Framework* into action, categorized as central leadership, support to Missions, and the cultivation of new partners:

1. USAID will **enhance its leadership and support structures to coordinate, unify, and elevate implementation efforts across the Agency.**
2. USAID will **develop new guidance for Missions and provide targeted support** to incorporate environmental and natural-resource management in country strategies and programs across sectors.
3. USAID will use this framework to **leverage, persuade, and invite implementers and other donors to address these pressing issues** with us, and to recruit and do business with new and underutilized partners.

CROSS-CUTTING PROGRAMMATIC APPROACHES

Effective implementation of the foregoing actions requires adherence to the following principles:

1. **Strong and inclusive governance structures and capacities at the local and national level are critical for enabling sound environmental and natural-resource management:** We seek measurable, sustainable, systemic results that will help spur sustainable economic growth, prevent conflict, and advance democratic values. This requires inclusive and transparent governance of natural resources, along with effective, adaptable, and responsive institutions, and the capacity to evaluate the environmental impact of proposed development programs. Improved governance, including land, marine, and resource tenure, and functional urban waste-management, power, and transport systems, is the foundation for sound environmental management. In addition, strengthening national and key regional governance structures allows countries to respond to transnational threats related to natural-resource management, including the illicit trafficking of wildlife, illegal and unregulated fishing, the custody of regional watersheds, and the spread of pollutants.
2. **Effective policies and transparent planning approaches are essential to achieving resilience, sustainability, and the sound management of resources:** We will strengthen, use, and promote proven and innovative landscape, marine, coastal, and urban planning approaches that integrate the latest science and evidence. Transparent and inclusive planning methods, such as environmental- and social-impact assessments, can signal to the private sector and other stakeholders long-term political commitment, which provides a necessary springboard for investment, implementation, and protection.
3. **Innovative partnerships and financing are key to advancing self-reliance:** Aligning with the Agency's [Private-Sector Engagement Policy](#) and supporting the capacity to develop and mobilize domestic public resources, open markets, and private capital, we will help unlock the finance needed to support effective natural-resource management and the development of resilient urban systems, and thereby build self-reliance.



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PRIORITY AREA I: IMPROVING NATURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT FOR SELF-RELIANCE

A country’s self-reliance depends upon on how government, civil society, and the private sector manage and govern protected areas, as well as productive lands and waters, and by how well they combat the illegal and illicit exploitation of natural resources. The unsustainable exploitation of natural resources is at the root of widespread environmental degradation and the loss of biodiversity, and consequent social and economic crises, which threaten development gains and, at scale, can destabilize nations. The degradation of land, the scarcity of water, pollution, and climatic shocks threaten the viability of agriculture, fisheries, tourism, and other economic activities critical in developing economies. In contrast, the responsible management of protected areas, sound agricultural and mining practices, clear land tenure, and well-sited infrastructure prevent the degradation of a country’s land, forests, coasts, and water supplies, and contribute to greater prosperity and well-being. The link between a country’s economic vulnerability and its capacity to manage its natural resources is particularly pronounced in developing nations rich in natural resources where unsustainable, undemocratic, or unscrupulous management can exacerbate inequities and generate conflict. This is why USAID has chosen to include “biodiversity and habitat protections” as a key metric of national commitment to development.

To address self-reliance in natural-resource management governments, civil society, and the private sector must assume three key responsibilities that, while not mutually exclusive, tend to require distinct approaches:

Conserving and managing high-priority natural land, marine, and coastal areas: including protected areas and their buffer zones, such as national parks, community-managed lands, game reserves, forest reserves, and marine reserves.

Managing natural resources for sustainable human use: including working forests and plantations, rangelands and agricultural lands, fisheries, marine and coastal resources, lakes, and rivers.

Combating conservation crimes: including by countering trafficking in wildlife and illegal logging, fishing, and mining.

USAID'S CURRENT WORK ON NATURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

Achieving USAID's mission requires strategic investments in conservation and the management of natural resources. USAID builds local and national capacity in this field through direct programming in a small number of sectors, through cross-cutting themes in other sectors, and by averting harm to natural resources through the application of environmental and social safeguards across our investments. For example, USAID's Environmental Procedures ensure we integrate environmental factors and values into our decision-making, identify environmental consequences of the programs we finance, and adopt appropriate environmental safeguards in all of them. USAID's programmatic investments follow distinct strategies, policies, and funding directives, each of which come with specific restrictions and target areas. This is important for accountable, goal-oriented sectoral programming, but has also left gaps in our ability to assess systematically the role of other aspects of the management of natural resources in a country's Journey to Self-Reliance, and to design programs to address them.

USAID currently invests in natural-resource management primarily by using two Congressionally directed funding streams—biodiversity and sustainable landscapes. Three other funding streams feature natural-resource management as cross-cutting themes—Feed the Future, Food For Peace development food-security activities, and water and sanitation. USAID's multi-sectoral investments in resilience also promote the sound management of natural-resources as a means to prevent recurring crises, and smaller funding streams such as for population, health, and the environment also contribute to the same goals. The Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance within the Bureau for Democracy, Conflict, and Humanitarian Assistance (soon to be the Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance) also address natural-resource management as part of its activities to reduce the risk of natural disasters, particularly in places where environmental degradation can contribute to, or worsen, recurrent calamities.

USAID'S PRIORITIES FOR MANAGING NATURAL RESOURCES

1. Conserve and manage high-priority natural land, marine, and coastal areas:

USAID is a global leader in biodiversity and the conservation of forests primarily through our work with biodiversity and sustainable landscapes funding. We do this by financing and assisting local stakeholders to address local threats to biodiversity and the drivers of deforestation and poor use of land. Globally, the top threat to natural land areas is agriculture and the production of timber; for marine areas, unsustainable fishing and pollution; and for freshwater, pollution from agriculture, erosion and sediment run-off from poor forestry practices, and disruptions to the natural flow of rivers because of dams. Growing threats for all habitats are weather-related shocks and the development of infrastructure. USAID strives to address these threats while advancing economic development and social well-being. For example, USAID can help improve national and local capacity to protect and manage natural forests and other ecosystems to conserve critical biodiversity and globally important forests, while improving efficiencies and sustainable productivity in established agricultural areas.

2. Manage natural resources for sustainable human use: USAID is also a leader in the sustainable management of productive resources in areas such as agriculture, fisheries, and forestry. The Agency could strengthen our efforts to manage and safeguard natural resources in ways that help avoid the degradation of land, marine, coastal, and freshwater areas through targeted investments and the proactive application of environmental safeguards. This could include the integration of the landscape-level management of natural resources as part of the productive use of land in agriculture and rangeland systems, forestry, and infrastructure to ensure healthy watersheds and ecosystems underpin sustainable development.

- 3. Combat conservation crimes:** USAID is a leader in working with governments, civil society, and the private sector to support their ability to combat wildlife, fisheries, and forest crimes. We have made large investments to address the illegal trade in, and extraction of, wildlife, forest products, and fish, including through support for law enforcement, forensic science, prosecutorial and judicial training, legal reform, monitoring supply-chains and detecting goods in transit, and promoting changes in behavior and social norms to reduce the demand for wildlife products. With like-minded partners, the U.S. Government also has built effective partnerships to address the demand, trafficking, and supply of illegal wildlife, forest, and fish products. USAID will continue to build on this strong foundation and expand to other conservation crimes, including illegal mining. Nascent efforts to address illegal artisanal and small-scale mining have focused on supporting formalization; establishing due-diligence processes; clarifying land tenure; and addressing environment, health, and safety concerns.



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PRIORITY AREA II: IMPROVING URBAN SYSTEMS FOR A CLEANER ENVIRONMENT AND ENHANCED HUMAN WELL-BEING

The sound management of natural resources and the competitiveness of cities are inextricably linked. Urbanization can be a tremendous opportunity—cities are the primary engines of economic activity, as they account for 80 percent of global Gross Domestic Product. The majority of the world’s population already lives in urban areas, which continue to grow by more than 75 million people each year. But too much of this growth is unplanned, unsustainable, and occurs in the absence of economic opportunity. These unsustainable patterns of urban development are at the root of the widespread contamination and depletion of natural resources. Environmental problems from poorly managed urbanization harm human health; threaten critical land, freshwater, and marine ecosystems; drain public budgets; hamper cities’ competitiveness; and serve as a drag on national-level economic growth and the Journey to Self-Reliance.

Proactively managing environmental risks helps sustain livelihoods, enhance human health and well-being, maintains critical services, and save scarce public funds for use in health, education, and security. To increase the positive effect of urbanization on national economies, cities must both reduce the negative environmental impacts on their residents, infrastructure, and natural-resource base, and also manage the threat posed to cities by poor natural-resource management in surrounding areas by focusing on three goals. While these goals require some distinct programmatic approaches, they largely depend on broader strengthening of the same urban institutions and systems:

Reducing Pollution: Air pollution is the single-largest environmental health risk, causing nearly seven million deaths around the world annually. In New Delhi, the annual average concentration of particulate matter in the air exceeds the Air-Quality Guidelines set by the World Health Organization by more than 12 times, and a recent study determined that air pollution was responsible for nearly a quarter of all infant deaths in sub-Saharan Africa from 2001–2015. Additionally, the contamination of marine environments, freshwater, and soil from urban sources can have far-reaching implications for human and ecosystem health. Marine plastic debris, 80 percent of which comes from land-based sources, is affecting fisheries and food security. Mismanaged municipal waste, including the burning of trash, mishandled toxic waste, and the disposal of debris at sea are prevalent. Rapidly urbanizing and industrializing areas also threaten the quality of soil and water, as they pollute local waterways and groundwater resources with biological and chemical contamination.

Reducing Urban Pressure on Natural Resources: Consumption and demands from urban and peri-urban areas drive significant use and extraction of resources, and the concentration of people in cities makes them key lever points to transform markets. For example, in many cities in developing countries, charcoal is still a main source of household energy. The production of charcoal contributes to deforestation, which, in turn, has a negative effect on local species, ecosystems, and communities, and can also contribute to an increased risk of flooding in surrounding areas. Resource pressures in developing cities are exacerbated by tremendous inefficiency in urban service provision. Average losses from water leakage and theft in developing cities are 40 percent and can be similarly high for electric utilities, leading to severe public financial consequences and higher-than-necessary natural resource needs. A greener, more sustainable city that prioritizes water and energy-efficiency is one that also co-exists sustainably with its outlying resource-base and communities.

Increasing Urban Resilience: Poor management of natural resources and infrastructure within cities is amplifying the impact of weather-related shocks and stresses, including heat waves, droughts, and intense flooding, which 70 percent of cities already experience. Ninety percent of urban areas are coastal, which makes them more susceptible to rises in sea levels and powerful storms. At the same time, estimates suggest that 40 percent of the world’s urban expansion is taking place in informal settlements and slums, where people are increasingly vulnerable to a wide range of shocks and stresses. Climate and pollution-related risks exacerbate one another—urban “heat islands” threaten human health and require more energy resources; droughts and flooding further contaminate safe drinking water; and marine pollution, poor land-management, and rising ocean temperatures and acidification combine to hasten the degradation of reefs and mangroves, leave coastlines without natural protection against severe storms.

USAID'S CURRENT WORK IN URBAN AREAS

Programs funded by USAID currently focus on energy, solid waste, the quality and delivery of water and sanitation, building urban resilience to weather-related shocks and stresses, urban planning, municipal governance, and financing for self-reliance. Certain programs address pollution specifically, such as USAID's municipal waste-recycling program that addresses marine plastics, toxic chemical pollution mitigation program, and clean-energy investments to mitigate air pollution. This Framework seeks to expand to a more integrated approach, filling in gaps to address systemic, root causes of the growing environmental threats to and caused by urban populations.

PROPOSED USAID PRIORITIES FOR URBAN AREAS

Urban waste-management, water and sanitation, energy, transport, and other systems need strengthening with a comprehensive and integrated approach to address the three priorities identified above: reducing pollution, reducing urban pressure on natural resources, and increasing urban resilience. In addition to enhanced sector-specific programming, USAID will pursue three cross-cutting programmatic priorities:

- 1. Strengthening the governance of municipalities and utilities to adopt the inclusive management of natural resources:** Poor governance has led to deficient infrastructure and substandard, inefficient services. Developing cities and surrounding jurisdictions often lack access to data on the health of natural resources and the impact of urban consumption on them. They also might lack political power within the central governance system, as well as a sufficient resource base to strategically plan and invest in critical infrastructure and natural capital, which is necessary to deliver efficient, reliable, and affordable services, including nature-based solutions central to resilience. Therefore, national policies, regulatory frameworks, and the governance of municipalities and utilities must be strengthened to enable the clean, safe, and reliable delivery of basic services; the control of pollution; the conservation of precious resources; and the mobilization of domestic public and private funds, including from consumers.
- 2. Improve strategic, transparent, and inclusive planning processes:** Municipalities need strategic urban and air-quality planning and transparent procurement processes to deliver safe water, electricity, transportation, and waste-management services; address unplanned growth; and build resilience. For example, procurement-linked planning has the potential to signal to the private sector long-term political commitment and, therefore, reduced risk, which can prime cities to leverage private investment and/or advanced financing tools.
- 3. Develop innovative partnerships, including with new and underutilized partners, especially the private sector:** Improvements in infrastructure, the management of natural resources, and service delivery all depend on efficiently and effectively bringing in new resources. For example, USAID can leverage the experience and strength of U.S. businesses in environmental technology through partnerships that provide solutions to air, water, and waste pollution. Additionally, increasing private-sector engagement in financing and management is increasingly necessary to improve or develop new infrastructure projects and services, and can ensure the continuity of business operations, protect jobs, and safeguard physical assets and supply-chains. Aligning the private sector with environmental and conservation objectives creates the potential for outcomes that allow firms to make a profit while advancing cleaner, healthier, more productive cities. USAID will explore innovative approaches to procurement, including the New Partnership Initiative, to build relationships with commercial and non-profit entities, especially local ones, that have not worked with USAID before.

CONCLUSION

This document provides an overarching framework for USAID on environmental and natural resource management to support the Journey to Self-Reliance. Close integration of investments in environmental and natural resource management with economic growth and social development is necessary to achieve our strategic objectives. Implementation of this Framework will enhance our ability to achieve our development mission and position USAID as a stronger partner with the private sector and local governments and civil society around the world.



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