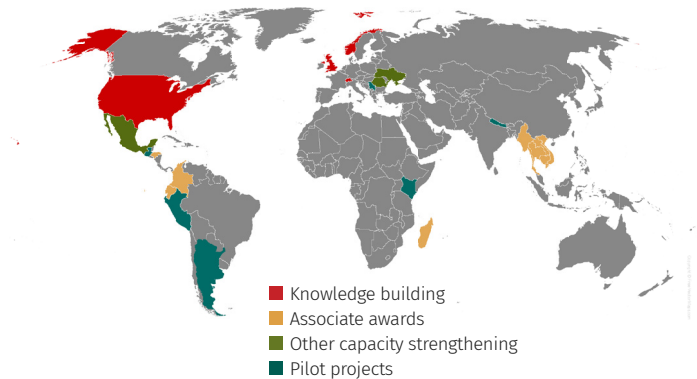# Strengthening Capacity for Targeting Natural Resource Corruption

USAID-funded project advances knowledge and strengthens policy and practice to address the negative impact of corruption on conservation and natural resource management objectives

Environmental corruption—the abuse of entrusted power for private gain that harms nature and those reliant upon it—jeopardizes essential global efforts to safeguard biodiversity, rights, and our climate future. Supported by USAID and led by the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) with a consortium of leading conservation and anti-corruption organizations, the Targeting Natural Resource Corruption (TNRC) project focused on improving biodiversity outcomes by equipping practitioners with knowledge and tools to address the threats posed by corruption to wildlife, fisheries, and forests.

- 🟥 Knowledge building
- 🟧 Associate awards
- 🟩 Other capacity strengthening
- 🟦 Pilot projects

Project structure

Implemented from 2018-2024, the TNRC Leader with Associates award delivered knowledge, communicated learning, field-tested approaches, strengthened networks, and mainstreamed anti-corruption in conservation work. The project was delivered by WWF in consortium with the U4 Anti-corruption Resource Centre at the Chr. Michelsen Institute, the Terrorism, Transnational Crime and Corruption Center (TraCCC) at George Mason University, and TRAFFIC, in strategic collaboration with the Basel Institute on Governance. Under this USAID investment mechanism, a $10 million Leader Award advanced capacity and $20 million was invested by USAID Missions in five places to implement anti-corruption activities.

Project impact

Capacity Strengthened
$10M knowledge project; $20M in country-based and regional projects in Colombia, Ecuador, Honduras, Madagascar and the Mekong

Knowledge Built
170+ resources and tools developed in 7 core programming areas; 1,200+ NGO staff trained; 140+ learning events

Approaches Field-Tested
Anti-corruption projects piloted in 6 countries; 1 regional initiative in Latin America and the Caribbean

Partnerships & Networks Forged
Countering Environmental Corruption Practitioners Forum co-founded with 600+ global members & 4 working groups; cross-sectoral collaborations on political economy analysis

Anti-Corruption Mainstreaming
Corruption issue elevated; Corruption lens integrated into strategies and risk tools of 2 global conservation organizations (WWF, TRAFFIC)

For more information, visit tnrcproject.org

Strengthening knowledge

Experience shows that corruption impacts all aspects of conservation. While the development sector has focused on anti-corruption for three decades, the conservation community is just beginning to unpack corruption risks that undermine outcomes for nature and respond to them through global programming. USAID identified a critical evidence and knowledge gap, and the TNRC consortium responded by delivering a first-of-its-kind Knowledge Hub with over 150 customized resources and tools to aid the conservation community. TNRC's open-access learning tools distill available evidence and centralize guidance for corruption-informed programming in seven areas: communities and inclusion, illicit financial flows, law enforcement and criminal justice, open governance, situation analysis, social norms and behavior change, and supply chains. Self-directed training and three-step guides help practitioners to address the impacts of corruption on wildlife trafficking, illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing, illegal logging and associated trade, protected areas and natural resource governance, community-based conservation, sustainable supply chains, and the climate crisis. To access Knowledge Hub resources, visit: https://www.worldwildlife.org/pages/tnrc-knowledge-hub.

Advancing research

To strengthen practice, research and learning should be mutually reinforcing. TNRC partners delivered new research in key areas, including on factors that condition the success and failure of anti-corruption efforts in the renewable resource sectors and new avenues for strengthening accountability in law enforcement, influencing corrupt behaviors and leveraging open data to expose red flags of corruption. Learn more at: https://www.worldwildlife.org/pages/tnrc-original-research.

Delivering project-based learning

Strengthening capacity involves investing in learning-by-doing. TNRC supported teams in 6 countries (Argentina, Serbia, Guatemala, Kenya, Nepal, and Peru) to design and implement projects that targeted specific corruption-related problems that undermine conservation goals. Tested interventions focused on closing opportunities for corruption in community forest management, artisanal fisheries, park monitoring, and spatial planning. A regional initiative in Latin America and the Caribbean mobilized further resources for corruption risk analysis in key supply chains, supporting new strategies and tools. Resulting project-based learning, stories, and case studies support other practitioners in their anti-corruption missions. Pilot learning is available at: https://www.worldwildlife.org/pages/tnrc-pilot-projects.

Growing networks and bridging expertise

Environmental corruption is a systemic challenge costing trillions of dollars, affecting the lives and livelihoods of billions of people and the future of our planet. Given the scale and cross-cutting nature of this threat, conservation and governance practitioners need to work together more closely and more frequently. A growing community of over 600 conservation and anti-corruption experts have come together to find and implement solutions. Together with Transparency International, TNRC launched the Countering Environmental Practitioners Forum whose four working groups are connecting practitioners who work on follow-the-money strategies, land corruption, open data, and climate finance. TNRC investments have also supported partnerships on political economy analysis to inform and influence conservation strategies in Ukraine and wider Central and Eastern Europe. Scaling these collaborations and forging new ones will be vital in the years ahead. Get engaged at: https://environmental-corruption.org/.

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