Preliminary Review of USAID Indigenous and Land-Related Projects
Accountability Research Center ([Homepage link](#))
December 6, 2023

Project Goals:
- *Open government is key to informing locally-led development*
- Our open government pilot project connects the dots across different public U.S. government data sources to analyze sectoral priorities and localization patterns of bilateral aid
  - ARC project page on [Monitoring Civic Engagement in Development Aid](#)

Topline Points:
- There is no publicly available method to systematically review all USAID Indigenous and Land-related projects
  - Comprehensive time series or cross-country analysis would be labor intensive and would require robust methodological considerations
    - Analysis would require qualifiers about gaps between the researcher's tagging of relevant projects compared to USAID's tagging of relevant projects
  - USAID tags projects with secondary labels denoting if it fits in these issue areas, but the data is proprietary
- Contextual knowledge is required for each country to determine the full scope of relevant projects. Even then, gaps may remain
  - Some projects are labeled using specific terminology for political reasons, both due to host country preferences and due to Congress' specific composition (for example, a environment-focused project being labeled economic development)
- USAID is uncertain they will publish a well-defined data collection process for Indigenous-related projects
- Land-related projects have a [standalone third-party managed website](#) with high-quality data, but gaps remain in project coverage
- Indigenous Peoples-related projects have a [USAID managed site](#) that is dated and has large gaps in coverage
- *More complete and user-friendly open government data would enhance the ability to analyze funding trends related to these two areas of importance*

Indigenous Peoples Projects Considerations:
- A recent webinar "[Land Dialogue Series—Turning Pledges into Action](#)" and a conversation with the Indigenous Peoples Group at USAID indicated a prioritization of "effective participation" and "co-creation" of project with local organizations
  - USAID and FCDO representatives outlined specific constraints related to oversight, reporting, and auditing for local organizations. They emphasized the value of providing funding to intermediaries that disburse funds and take on risk
- The USAID Indigenous Peoples Group interfaces with more than 100 country missions and noted their work focuses largely on coordination with:
  - Country partners: communicating with host governments and private sector actors
  - Indigenous peoples: explaining how to work with USAID and why

- The [USAID Indigenous Peoples Group](#) website provides relevant documents about their mission and focus of the group
  - The main site largely focuses on the "USAID Policy on Promoting the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (PRO-IP)", providing information on where projects related to this initiative are located, but no links to the specific projects
  - The site provides a [limited set of country profiles](#) with some project information
- No database specifying Indigenous-related projects exists within USAID or globally
- Decentralization of data management across USAID can result in the same projects listed on official government websites with different names
  - This issue generates large problems for finding relevant projects and for systematic data analysis. For example, the same project can be listed as:
    - "PNG Lukautim Graun Program," on the [project's decided page](#) and on [USAID's Celebrating Innovative Partnerships page](#), then as
    - "USAID PNG Biodiversity," on ForeignAssisatnce.gov
      - Only on USASpending.gov, if one has the Project ID, can they find a description that connects 'biodiversity' and 'customary' land management

Land Projects Considerations:
- Land Links provides user-centered data, with an interactive map of USAID projects on the homepage and a link to [a more comprehensive map of global land-related projects](#)
  - The site also offers: An [evaluations page](#), with detailed USAID reports; A [cross-sector impact page](#), with blogs and sectoral analysis; A [USAID Land Projects page](#), listing 113 projects tagged by USAID as land-related
- We have attempted to systematically analyze the 113 projects listed on the USAID Land Projects page, but have encountered four issues indicating any conclusions based on the available data must be considered preliminary:
  - Data on Land Links cannot be cross-referenced with other sites, such as ForeignAssisatnce.gov.
    - Land Links does not disclose their methodology, limiting independent verification of the funding directed to land-specific project elements
    - Land Links does not provide the date for which page data was last updated
  - Gaps in coverage. We have found projects that should be included but are not, such as different iterations of the same project that did not make the page
    - For example, Kenya's 'LEAP' project is included, but 'LEAP II' with 5x the funding is not
  - Inability to independently verify the existence of the project on separate sites
    - For example, the Afghan 'LARA' project does not seem to appear to be independently searchable on ForeignAssisatnce.gov or USASpending.gov. Yet, the project is discoverable on IATI due to uploaded reports using the 'LARA' name, even as the main project name is redacted. The uploaded documents are visible on IATI but are only available on USAID's Development Clear House to authorized users
    - For example, 'Kenya: Voices In Peace' targeted online searches only produces hits on the Land Links website and cannot be found elsewhere
  - Global or Multi-country projects requiring special consideration to understand relative country funding totals

Potential Future Research Designs:

- Limit research scope to a single country, or set of countries
    - Independent verification of Indigenous or Land-related projects could be bolstered by country mission outreach
- Limit research scope to a single year if interested in a thematic area
    - Build out specific methodological considerations in the single year pilot to potentially scale. As previously noted, there may not be work-arounds for scalable, systematic analysis