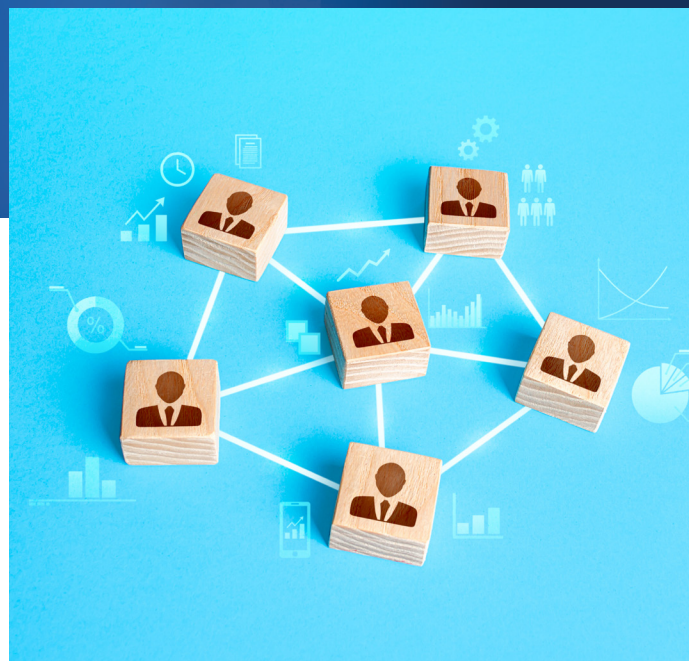# Integrated Governance: Achieving Governance Results and Contributing to Sector Outcomes

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Contents

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Abstract

Achieving broad-based socio-economic development requires interventions that bridge disciplines, strategies, and stakeholders. Effective sustained progress requires more than simply an accumulation of sector projects, and poverty reduction, individual wellbeing, community development, and societal advancement do not fall neatly into sectoral categories. However, researchers and practitioners recognize key operational challenges to achieving effective integration that stem from the structures and processes associated with the current practice of international development. Integration calls for the intentional linking of intervention designs, implementation, and evaluation across sectors and disciplines to achieve mutually reinforcing outcomes. In this report, we summarize the results of a study we conducted to explore the challenges facing governance programs that integrate with sector interventions to achieve governance outcomes and contribute to sector outcomes. Through a review of policy documents and project reports from recent integrated governance programs and interviews with donor and practitioner staff, we found three integrated governance programming variants, an emphasis on citizen and government collaboration to improve service delivery, interventions that serve as the glue between sectors, and a balancing act for indicators to measure contribution to sectoral outcomes. Our analysis identified four key success factors: contextual readiness, the application of learning and adapting approaches, donor support, and recognition of the limitations of integrated governance. We then discuss recommendations and implications and for answering the challenge of integrating governance and sector programming to achieve development outcomes.

Introduction

Achieving broad-based socio-economic development often requires interventions that bridge disciplines, strategies, and stakeholders. Besides economics, realizing development draws on anthropology, political science, sociology, psychology, history, epidemiology, and biology (among others). Each of these disciplines, in turn, encourages different strategies to advance development and offers a variety of interventions in support of those strategies. International development policymakers and practitioners carve these disciplinary perspectives into sectors, often with earmarked or protected funding streams, such as health, education, agriculture, governance, and water and sanitation. Sector interventions are packaged as autonomous projects, what Albert Hirschman memorably labeled "privileged particles of the development process."[1] Within the US Agency for International Development (USAID) at the mission level, the Country Development Cooperation Strategy seeks to link sector efforts and encourage integration. However, sector-specific policies and protected funding streams often inhibit these efforts. Additional policy, funding, and regulation complications constrain programmatic coordination across donors. The cumulative effect of these dynamics is that international development practice has traditionally operated in a fragmented manner, separated by sector, and divided into sequences of individual projects by various donors, leading to the familiar laments that programming is often stove-piped and uncoordinated.

Both researchers and practitioners have long recognized that effective and sustained socio-economic development is more than simply an accumulation of sector projects and that poverty reduction, individual wellbeing, community development, and societal advancement do not fall neatly into sectoral categories. However, the key operational challenge has been, and continues to be, how to achieve effective integration: What structures and processes associated with the current practice of international development can be modified to enable the intentional linking of intervention designs, implementation, and evaluation across sectors and disciplines to achieve mutually reinforcing outcomes?

In this report, we summarize the results of a study we conducted that focused on exploring this challenge as it relates to governance programs that aim to integrate with sector interventions to achieve governance outcomes and contribute to sector outcomes. In an earlier analysis of integrated governance, our starting point for examining integration was sector projects and experts whose experiences with disappointing sector results led them to integrate governance components into their interventions.[2]

For this study, however, we began from the perspective of governance projects and specialists that seek to contribute to sector outcomes. We recognize that many international development funders work in integrated governance. However, for this study, we focused on USAID-funded programs. We reviewed policy documents and project reports from recent integrated governance programs and interviewed technical staff in the USAID Center for Democracy, Human Rights and Governance (DRG), RTI International's US-based governance program managers, Chiefs of Party (COPs), and project-based staff and technical staff in peer implementing organizations.

The questions we explored in our document analysis and interviews included the following:

- What constitutes integrated governance?
- How do integrated governance projects function to produce the anticipated positive outcomes?
- What makes integrated governance programming successful?

In this paper, we begin with a brief look back at the history of governance integration, followed by a few details on our research methodology. Then, we present the findings from our research, identify and discuss common themes that we observed, and draw some lessons learned. Through our analysis, we find that the core elements of integrated governance appear as multiple variations of programming that emphasize citizen and government collaboration to improve service delivery in sustainable ways, with interventions that serve as the glue between sectors and that require balance in indicators that measure contribution to sectoral outcomes. Our analysis identified four key success factors: contextual

readiness, learning and adapting approaches, donor support, and knowing the limitations of integrated governance. We conclude with recommendations and ideas on the path forward for integrating governance and sector programming to achieve development outcomes.

Background

There is a long history of donor agency efforts to use integration to improve prospects for achieving development outcomes, although the prominence of integrated approaches has fluctuated over time and their defining features have remained amorphous. Core aspects of this history follow.

Early History of Integrated Rural Development

Beginning in the 1950s and 1960s and continuing into the 1980s, implementers of rural development programs were early practitioners of integration, organized around enabling rural populations to meet their basic needs. Such programs frequently combined agricultural extension and inputs, road construction and repair, healthcare provision, nutrition support, school construction and teacher training, water and sanitation access, and community development.[3] The design of these programs included the transfer of the integrated functions to local government administrations.[4]

Researchers looking at integrated rural development (IRD) found that integration[5]

- Led to more efficient resource use through sharing and eliminating duplication,

- Generated economies of scale so fewer resources were needed to produce a given output,

- Helped allocate resources to the highest priority community needs, and

- Enabled programs to capture positive externalities from integrated sector interventions.

These studies also noted organizational obstacles to implementing integrated programs that limited their effectiveness in practice. For example, the complexity of coordinating joint efforts across sectors challenged the capacity of local institutions that served marginal populations in remote rural regions.

Weak, decentralized sector administrative units and feeble local governments often proved inadequate to take on IRD's cross-sectoral functions.[6] The solution to weak institutional capacity was often to set up new implementation units, staffed with expatriate and national experts—the latter siphoned away from existing ministries—that bypassed these obstacles, at least during the life of the programs.[7] As a result, sustainability suffered, and donors largely abandoned IRD programming by the 1980s, deeming it an impractical, expensive approach with a difficult-to-scale implementation strategy.

Governance as a Distinct Sector

As donors moved away from IRD, they increasingly recognized that well-functioning state institutions were key to countries' socio-economic development. Thus, integration strategies shifted to focus on reinforcing the capacities of the state to manage development and to engage with citizens.[8] These strategies paid particular attention to the spatial distribution of state capacities, leading to renewed focus on decentralization: the allocation of functions, authorities, and resources across central, regional, and local levels.[9]

By the late 1980s and early 1990s, governance emerged as a sector in its own right, focusing on how governments and citizens can effectively interact to solve development problems at multiple levels (Box 1). Governance as a sector then grew substantially with the collapse of the Soviet Union, when 15 newly independent republics transitioned away from a socialist system. During this period, the World Bank began addressing governance issues, and USAID created a dedicated organizational unit to support governance initiatives (what is today the Center for Democracy, Human Rights, and Governance—DRG). USAID governance staff developed terminology, tools, research, and programs to promote democratic governance, which coalesced to form its own distinctive toolkit that highlighted problems requiring governance tools and solutions. The "R" in DRG was added during the Obama Administration to emphasize the importance of human rights.

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Governance is a broad term used to describe the institutions, structures, and processes that allocate political, economic, and social authorities and responsibilities within a given society. This large conceptual "tent" includes technocratic public sector management such as regulatory systems, service delivery, or tax administration and features of political regimes such as democratic and electoral systems, separation of powers, and citizens' rights.[2] Governance definitions often reveal a normative preference, either explicitly or implicitly, for democratic structures, processes, and practices, characterizing them as "good" governance. We recognize that allocations of power and authority differ across societies, and their relative merits continue to be debated on values and effectiveness grounds. For our purposes, we follow the framework in USAID's 2013 DRG strategy and define governance as institutions, structures, and processes that enable broad participation and inclusion, facilitate transparency and availability of information, and support accountability of public officials to the rule of law and citizens.[10]

However, the establishment of the USAID DRG Center, along with its toolkits and associated DRG language, led to the general perception among USAID's sector offices (e.g., health, education) that governance was something detached from their sector priorities. The Center's original programmatic pillars of democracy promotion, civil society strengthening, human rights, and rule of law struck other sector specialists, whose service delivery programs concentrated on reaching congressionally earmarked and specific sector targets, as unconnected to their priorities. To them, governance jargon seemed impenetrable, and the DRG tools were, if not superfluous, then of second or third order importance to achieving sector outcomes.

Mirroring the earlier fate of IRD practice, early attempts at governance integration in USAID during the late 1990s confronted multiple impediments. Researchers and practitioners criticized program designs as overly complex, with uncertain results either dependent on external factors beyond implementers' manageable interest or too under-resourced and narrowly focused to achieve demonstrable results within program lifespans. Bureaucratic barriers included USAID's rigid structures and internal budgeting procedures, siloed thinking, earmarked funding, and perceptions that

governance staff were chasing sector money. In the wake of downturns in dedicated DRG core funding around 2010, DRG Center staff and DRG staff within USAID missions reached out to their sector colleagues to leverage limited resources by trying to demonstrate the relevance and results of integrating governance into health, education, and other sector programs. This resulted in several integrated governance projects with varying approaches and outcome targets. These impediments limited integrated governance programming in practice, a finding noted in a 2016 report[11] that reflects many of the conclusions from a study of USAID's integrated programming from 20 years ago.[12] For example, it took the strong leadership of the Mission Director in Rwanda to ensure that governance approaches could be retained through sector programming despite DRG funding cuts. This resulted in the integration of civic engagement activities into education programming.

Governance Contributions to Sector Programs' Successes

The United Nations' agreement on the Millennium Development Goals in 2000, followed by the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) adopted in 2015, provided a strategic blueprint for international development donors and reinforced the salience of governance as an essential contributor to integrated development. The SDG agenda explicitly notes that reaching its 17 goals and 169 targets depends upon integrating governance, economic, social, and environmental interventions.[13] USAID and other bilateral development agencies have publicly committed to integrated policies and programming as being central to their commitment to the SDGs.

Within USAID, the 2013 DRG Strategy's renewed attention to local systems, sustainability, and political economy pushed more country missions to pursue cross-sector programming. Furthermore, the strategy included a specific strategic objective committed to integration of DRG principles and practices across sectors and included "integration" as a key issue in USAID's annual reporting to Congress.[10,14] In the health sector, for example, health systems strengthening has paid increased attention to governance, particularly related to accountability for service delivery access and quality.[15] Similarly, large

global programs like the US President's Emergency Plan for AIDS and Gavi (the Vaccine Alliance) have come to recognize that governance reforms play a role in optimizing procurement, mobilizing domestic resources for health, and assuring continuity of health service delivery. The COVID-19 pandemic has reinforced these lessons.

Both international development project evaluations and academic research have helped to build an evidence base for the links between governance improvements and better sector outcomes. From individual field experiments with local accountability for primary health care in Uganda[16] to a study that uses a large multi-year, multi-country database to analyze links between measures of democracy and good governance and population health,[17] a variety of research shows connections between governance and sector results. Effective governance has been linked to sectoral results, including better access to education in democracies,[18] increased life expectancies with lower levels of corruption,[19] and health service readiness with coordinated integrated governance programming.[20]

From a practical perspective, these studies say less about *how* governance interventions might be integrated to improve the prospects for contributing to enhanced and sustained sector outcomes. Individual project analyses, however, have shed some light on this question. For example, a study of USAID/Guinea's Multi-Sectoral Interventions to Advance Democratic Governance project (commonly known as *Faisons Ensemble*, 2007–2013) found positive impacts in four sectors (i.e., agriculture, education, health, and natural resources management) from the project's governance interventions (i.e., dissemination/ training on the local government code, creation of civil society-government innovation circles, peer-to-peer learning and experience exchanges, training in procurement, tax collection, and resource mobilization).[21] Another example is the USAID/Burma *Shae Thot* project, which used an integrated approach across sectors to strengthen community-level governance through Village Development Committees (VDCs) and promote financial sustainability through village development funds. An external final evaluation

of the project observed improved sector outcomes in health, WASH (water, sanitation, and hygiene), food security, and economic growth in *Shae Thot* areas of operation. This was largely because the VDC governance structures were widely valued by community members; respondents emphasized that they were crucial facilitators of community unity, collaboration, and development.[22]

Integrated Governance Today

As our brief background discussion has shown, attention to the utility and practicality of integrated governance programming has been cyclical, arising in approximately 20-year iterations. In 2021, building on the foundation of the SDGs, USAID's 2013 DRG strategy and the Biden Administration's focus on DRG, the integration of DRG principles into sector programs has again moved to center stage. Another recent trend is the increased work of researchers and practitioners to understand integrated programming contributions to sectoral outcomes. This includes recent or ongoing research in Senegal,[20] the Democratic Republic of the Congo,[23] and Uganda[24] on the effects of integrated governance on health service outcomes and in Malawi on integration at the USAID mission level.[25] However, the operational impediments to capitalizing on the governance integration noted here remain real. Below, we provide a quick summary of how we organized our study to develop further insights on understanding the challenges and opportunities for governance contributions to service delivery in other sectors.

Study Methods

To conduct this study, we identified and reviewed background policy papers and project documents from 13 current or recent (since 2010) integrated programs (Table 1). We selected these documents based on an extensive search of USAID's Development Express Clearinghouse for integrated governance project documents. The selected integrated governance projects were implemented by various organizations, including RTI, in 12 countries across four regions. The projects ranged in duration from 3 to 9 years and in value from just under $12 to $70 million. All projects reviewed were

Table 1. Projects reviewed

USAID Project (Lead Implementing Organization)	Country	Approximate Budget & Years Operational	Governance Focus	Sector Focus
Faisons Ensemble (With Many) (RTI International)	Guinea	$24,000,000 2007–2013	Central and local government capacity, anti-corruption, CSO capacity, and citizen participation	Health, education, agriculture, and natural resource management (NRM)
Leadership, Empowerment, Advocacy, and Development (LEAD) (RTI International)	Nigeria	$49,000,000 2009–2018	State and local government capacity and transparency, and local organization capacity	Health, education, sanitation, and water
Responsive Governance Program (Counterpart International)	Yemen	$43,000,000 2010–2015	Central government capacity and transparency, citizen participation, CSO capacity and participation	Water, education, health, and economic growth
Kinerja Local Governance Service Improvement Program (RTI International)	Indonesia	$25,000,000 2010–2015	Local citizen/organization capacity, and local government capacity,	Health, education, and business licensing
Strengthening Decentralization for Sustainability Project (Cardno Emerging Markets)	Uganda	$70,000,000 2010–2016	Local government capacity and finance management, & CSO capacity	Health / HIV
Shae Thot Local Development (Pact)	Myanmar	$70,000,000 2011–2018	Local government and CSO capacity	MCH, livelihoods and food security, and WASH
Governance, Accountability, Participation, & Performance Program (GAPP) (RTI International)	Uganda	$35,000,000 2012–2019	Central and local government performance, fiscal management, and citizen/CSO/private sector capacity	Health, education, and water
Nexos Locales (Local Governance Project) (DAI)	Guatemala	$32,000,000 2014–2023	Central and local governance capacity, finance management, & CSO and citizen participation	Food insecurity and natural disasters
Liberia Accountability and Voice Initiative (DAI)	Liberia	$18,000,000 2015–2002	CSO/private sector/local government capacity and participation	Education and NRM
Local Government Accountability and Performance (DAI)	Malawi	$39,500,000 2016–2021	Local government capacity and transparency, citizen participation, CSO capacity, and central government policy reform	Health, education, and agriculture
Governance for Local Development (GOLD) (RTI International)	Senegal	$25,000,000 2017–2023	Local government capacity, resource mobilization, community participation, and national fiscal transfers	Health, education, and WASH
Integrated Governance Activity (DAI)	DRC	$40,000,000 2017–2022	Local government capacity, and citizen participation	Health and food security
Project Supporting the Efficient Management of State Resources (GERÉ) (RTI International)	Haiti	$10,000,000 2019–2022	Local and central government capacity resource mobilization, CSO/citizen participation, and government collaboration	n/a

Notes: CSO = civil society organization; MCH = maternal and child health; WASH = water, sanitation, and hygiene.

single country; the longer and higher value projects covered more geography and sector areas than the more modest projects. We reviewed approximately 50 publicly available quarterly, annual, and final reports; external evaluations; and other research studies.

Additionally, we conducted semi-structured interviews with 22 individuals from February to April 2021. We interviewed a mix of USAID staff, selected based on their roles working in democracy and governance or in governance work within other sectors such as health or biodiversity; staff working full time on integrated governance programs globally; RTI staff familiar with program design and program management; and staff from peer organizations working in integrated governance. Table 2 shows the distribution of interviewee roles.

Interview notes were analyzed qualitatively in May 2021. Using Atlas.Ti, our research team coded interview notes using a standard codebook developed based on the interview guides and then analyzed coded quotations to develop themes. Analysis focused on our three research questions:

1. What constitutes integrated governance?

2. How do integrated governance projects function to produce the anticipated positive outcomes?

3. What makes integrated governance programming successful?

Subtopics in our codebook covered the definition of integrated governance, the history and evolution, the processes by which governance contributes to outcomes (including the types of activities) and success factors and challenges, including sub-themes on the role of the donor, project team, and contextual elements.

The results we report reflect the qualitative analysis of interview respondents and of project documents to reveal common themes and lessons learned. We recognize that this study presents a limited view of integrated governance, drawing on a purposive sample with limited geographic, sectoral, temporal, and donor scope. The chosen methods did allow for more intimate knowledge and connection and deeper and more rounded reflection by viewing the same project from multiple perspectives.

Findings and Analysis

Our research, exploring integrated governance projects that aim to achieve both governance and sector outcomes, surfaced key results in two groupings (Table 3).

Table 2. Interviewee roles

Interviewee Role	Number of Interviewees
USAID technical officers in Washington, DC and missions	7
RTI project staff	5
RTI US-based project management staff	5
Peer organization staff	5

Table 3. Key findings

Core Elements of Integrated Governance	Success Factors for Integrated Governance Programs
• Integrated governance appears in three variations • Integrated governance projects link government with citizens to improve public services and influence systems leading to greater sustainability • Integrated governance interventions can serve as the glue between sectors • The use of indicators is a balancing act, as programs seek to measure contribution to sectoral outcomes	• Contextual readiness factors are important in design • Infusing specific learning and adaptation approaches contributes to successfully integrated governance programs • Supportive donor policies, procedures, and people pave the way • It is important to understand the limits of integrated governance programming

Core Elements of Integrated Governance

Integrated governance appears in three variations

In our analysis of 13 projects' documents and our interviewees' responses on the definition of integrated governance, we found three forms of integrated governance:

1. Governance projects with an end goal of contributing to other sector outcomes;

2. Sector projects that includes a range of crosscutting governance activities; and

3. Projects that address a local challenge (conflict, shocks, underdevelopment) in a multi-sectoral, holistic, integrated, and coordinated way.

We found the projects we reviewed fell into the following categories: governance projects (10), sector projects that included significant governance activities (2), and projects addressing a local challenge in a multisectoral way (1); the nature of our research was to focus predominantly on the first category. These categories appeared as a theme in the interviews, where multiple respondents acknowledged the variations of integrated governance. Some respondents voiced a preference for or stronger belief in one category over another. This finding, that multiple conceptualizations for integrated governance exist, can help deepen and nuance our understanding of the core elements of integrated governance and how they manifest in international development. Yet, it also presents a challenge for both researchers and practitioners: to agree on the core features to further strong implementation and learning.

Our literature review also provided a historical perspective on integrated governance in international development. At different times, the trends over the last 70 years favored each of the three variations of integrated governance. Despite this growing body of integrated governance research and writing, the lack of clarity and inability to define integrated governance precisely, even among practitioners, demonstrates a need for additional learning on processes and results of integrated governance.

A clear trend across interviews was the connection of integrated governance most strongly with decentralization or local government strengthening.

In the words of one practitioner: *"Governance is a social contract. Citizen trust in government service delivery is the central principle. This is most evident at the sub-national government level."* This sentiment has its roots in IRD, described previously, where development projects responded to the needs of mobilized citizens in communities. These projects were multi-sectoral and aimed to improve local service provision and infrastructure broadly— meaning in one community, the project may have built a road whereas in another it supported a health center or teacher training. This localized community needs–focused approach has continued in USAID's governance programming focused at the local level. Several respondents noted that civil society–strengthening projects often take on an integrated governance posture because many of these projects include support for advocacy campaigns or action grants that cross sectors. Although many of our interview respondents focused their responses on subnational integrated governance, some noted this approach ignores the larger governance interplay between elected officials and the bureaucracy at the national level and the competitive relationships and inefficiencies among local, regional, and central authorities.

Integrated governance projects link government with citizens to improve public services and influence systems leading to greater sustainability

Our review of program evaluations of the projects in our study found that integrated governance projects are more likely to achieve their stated objectives when they address local socioeconomic priorities, are inclusive of local stakeholders, and provide tangible benefits to the citizens who live in the areas in which they operate. Projects that focus almost exclusively on general institutional capacity building or teaching new political processes face challenges sustaining inputs and results because neither the incentives of officials administering the reforms nor the benefits to citizens, are evident. A common sentiment from many of our interviewees, expressed by a USAID DRG officer, was that *"governance is not for the sake of governance."* If citizens can see the link between changes in government processes and receiving better services that they themselves prioritize, positive outcomes are more likely to be sustained even when

the integrated governance project ends. In terms of implementation of integrated governance projects, we found that when a project strengthens the service delivery system rather than directly providing services, the improved service provision is more likely to last beyond the project lifespan.

In our review of current and recent integrated governance projects (see Table 1), we found several examples of governance and other sector programs collaborating on specific initiatives that linked government processes and service delivery. In Senegal, a WASH program found it much more efficient and sustainable to work in communes where the USAID/GOLD program had already trained local governments on planning, financial management, and project management. Similarly, a health project in Senegal created audience-tested messages on COVID-19 mitigation, and the USAID/GOLD progam supported the message broadcast through its network of community radios. In another case, the Nexos Locales project in Guatemala created a transparency app for social auditing and shared the technology with the USAID Urban Municipal Governance project, which replicated it in their target municipalities. In Malawi, the mission encouraged program implementors to capitalize on their core skills and share with other programs. For example, an education program helped other programs ensure outreach materials were written at the right literacy level for the target population.

Furthermore, our findings suggest that positive gains arise when programs are designed using a systems approach[26] as opposed to a series of siloed activities focused only on individual organizations or government institution capacity development. It is our observation from the project reports that the more integrated and systems-focused a project is, the more entry points it has for success and sustainability. This includes projects that use horizontal, multi-stakeholder (i.e., government, business, and civil society) mechanisms for governance initiatives such as planning, budgeting, service delivery, and policymaking, among others. It also includes vertical integration whereby responsibilities and competencies are clearly understood and function from national to regional to local levels. Finally, of

the projects we reviewed, our findings suggest that governance reforms were more likely to stick when government entities involve citizens and deliver on their priorities. This closes the loop of the social contract by delivering on the governance and sector achievements that lead to improved service delivery. These transformational changes and citizen expectations lead to lasting impacts both of the governance reforms and real-life impacts in the lives of citizens. Box 2 offers an illustration.

One USAID DRG officer suggested that a stronger emphasis on the sustainability dimension driven by systemic governance work could help strengthen the long-term horizon in measuring sectoral results: *"The sustainability of our investments and development objectives, no matter the sector, depend on government institutions and structures that work across silos with non-state actors and civil society to promote shared outcomes."* This comment is reinforced by research on systems thinking, which found that USAID staff see the holistic perspective that systems thinking facilitates as valuable for developing country strategies and crafting project designs and that the emphasis on flexibility, feedback loops, and adaptation improves implementation success.[27]

> **Box 2. Local Government and Citizens Strengthen Health Services in Nigeria**
>
> USAID/Nigeria designed the LEAD project to coordinate disparate local development donor efforts in Nigeria and to strengthen subnational government entities, particularly in their relationships with the higher-level state authorities overseeing them. In addition to building local officials' capacity and working on policy reform, a key project focus was partnering with CSOs to consolidate and amplify citizen voice for the improvement of locally prioritized services. Using community scorecards and collective action methods, LEAD and partner CSOs assessed public opinion on services and then worked in tandem with local government entities to develop and implement service improvement plans. One concrete example of the results of the collaborative government and citizen service delivery improvement was that the number of health facilities with 24-hour operations increased from 44 in 2015 to 123 in 2017 in Bauchi State—an almost threefold improvement.[28]

Integrated governance interventions can serve as the glue between sectors

Our review of program documents and our interviews revealed a range of program interventions that included attention to people, such as strengthening the capacity of key leaders or service providers and attention to processes, such as budgeting and planning or social accountability interventions. Interestingly, many interviewees considered that a focus on both individuals and processes is good development practice and important for lasting results. In the words of one integrated governance program COP: *"governance is the glue that holds all the sectors together"*; thus, strengthening governance provides the best chance for sustained impact. In other words, development depends on structures that work across silos and actors who promote shared outcomes. These findings reinforce the experiences of practitioners, and the historical evolution of governance as a sector, that attention to governance is an essential element of responsible and long-lasting international development work across sectors. Experience tells us if one focuses only on people, the capacity leaves when key staff are transferred, and processes remain the same. Likewise, if one works solely on processes, there is a risk that structures may change, but people's entrenched norms and expectations remain unchanged.

Based on our analysis of the integrated governance interventions, we found differences in the work of integrated governance programs falling within the framework of the three categories we previously identified: (1) governance projects with an end goal of contributing to sector outcomes; (2) other

sector projects that include a range of crosscutting governance activities; and (3) projects that addresses a local challenge in a multi-sectoral, holistic, integrated, and coordinated way. The differences also reflect the processes or the way by which the interventions serve as the glue and seek to contribute to sectoral outcomes. Illustrative interventions included within each category are shown in Table 4.

This analysis of illustrative interventions within the variations of integrated governance helps clarify the differences in the three conceptualizations and their core elements of integrated governance. Recognizing the differences can help donors and implementers clarify the goals or focus during program design, test, refine, and scale activities during implementation and measure and learn from outcomes, in the way integrated governance drives results in governance systems and in other sectors. Further in the paper we discuss donor strategies and implementation tactics.

The use of indicators is a balancing act, as programs seek to measure contribution to sectoral outcomes

The most frequent challenge our interviewees noted was the difficulty of including sectoral results as outcomes from a governance program. In the words of one USAID DRG officer,

> This question is the holy grail…how do you as the [democracy and governance] *program avoid being held accountable for achieving sectoral outcomes but demonstrate that your program contributes to achieving them?*

Almost everyone interviewed cited the importance of linking integrated governance interventions

Table 4. Interventions in variations of integrated governance programming

Governance Programs That Specifically Seek to Contribute to Sector Outcomes	Other Sector Programs That Include Attention to Governance	Integrated Development Program Intervening Holistically in a Community
• Local government service improvement planning and implementation • Participatory budgeting on citizen service priorities • Capacity building for CSOs and citizens to engage in service planning or service monitoring • Intentional and resourced collaboration with other donor-funded programs, across sectors. (i.e., joint-work planning, co-programming activities, or shared monitoring, evaluation and learning processes)	• Social accountability initiatives within the sector (such as teacher absenteeism monitoring) • Improving the sector ministries' financial management or procurement processes • Training for service providers	• Leverage governance and sector specialists to train local leaders and mobilize local financing • Directly providing services or contributions such as health care inputs or agriculture supplies

and concrete changes in sectoral outcomes. In their experience, sector-focused funders and practitioners particularly wish to see how governance improvements lead to specific short-term tangible targets in their sector. For example, one USAID DRG officer referenced health colleagues who want to see results of the integrated governance program in terms of medication delivered or child stunting reduced, rather than the building blocks of underlying systems such as citizen input into community planning or financial management of local budgets for service delivery. Multiple respondents commented that Congressional pressure for short-term outputs and outcomes contributes to this challenge and, at times, the disconnect between governance and other sector specialists. Some spoke of the lag time between governance interventions and observable sectoral results and the need to invest in relationship building and local ownership first.

Relatedly, almost all interview respondents focused on the concrete challenges of attributing long-term sector outcomes to governance improvements. With myriad conflating contextual factors, many limitations, and variables outside the control of implementers, our analysis found that it is very challenging to attribute the long-term effects on people receiving quality health care, for example, to governance interventions. Another challenge is when some programs are designed to achieve highly localized but not generalizable results. For example, when communities receive governance support to focus on a specific locally identified priority, one might see a change in that specific sector in that location but not at scale across multiple locations in the same sector. Box 3 describes how a governance program in Uganda grappled with this challenge.

In both our interviews and our review of project documents, we found some instances where governance programs were held contractually accountable for results in other sectors. Several respondents cited this competition for priority (governance vs. sector results) as diverting attention away from governance programs' commitment to direct governance activities such as local governments engaging in participatory planning or raising local revenues. Of the 13 integrated governance projects

Box 3. Governance Program Downstream Contributions to Health Outcomes in Uganda

The USAID/Uganda GAPP Program was designed to strengthen government performance and accountability at the local and national levels. Capitalizing on a window of opportunity because of a specific request to USAID from the leadership in the Ministry of Health, GAPP was able to work with ministry officials to improve inter- and intra-ministry coordination, service standards, and the Ministry of Health procurement systems—which had long been thought of as inefficient and lacked accountability. GAPP provided embedded specialists within the Ministry accounting and engineering office to install transparency mechanisms, tighten financial controls, and add accountability in key ministry functions, including procurement, audit, vehicle maintenance, and construction. This resulted in over $1.4 million savings over 2 years and enabled the Ministry to improve additional health facilities and install needed equipment. The cost savings from the better procurement processes went to improving access and quality of health services, including improved infrastructure and vehicle fleet management, thereby providing more people with health services. The operational assumption, or theory of change, is that funds for improved health facilities and equipment result in improved access, quality, coverage, and safety of health care, which improves health outcomes for individuals downstream. One pathway by which governance system improvements lead to sectoral outcomes is improved accountability and financial management, enabling greater efficiency to deliver services. Although the GAPP program would not claim direct impact on individual health outcomes, it is clear that these integrated governance interventions contribute to sectoral outcomes.[27]

studied, eight had both governance and sector indicators, though many indicators remained at the output level, such as funding budgeted for local health services or systems strengthening indicators such as improved policies or processes. One solution suggested by an interviewee is that the USAID mission officers and integrated governance program leadership review possible indicators of sectoral interest and determine to which ones the integrated governance program can contribute. Another particularly useful method can be qualitatively elaborating individual examples of governance work and other sectoral outcomes and documenting them as success stories or as part of the learning agenda. This kind of qualitative data and research can help tell the story that links integration and sectoral outcomes.

Both practitioner and donor respondents referenced a program's theory of change as a central tool for program design and articulating program impact in governance and other sectors. In many of the integrated governance programs we reviewed, a core component of the theory of change was that strengthening governance functions would improve the systems of service delivery, which would improve services and impacts on citizens' lives downstream. For example, an integrated governance program may articulate the theory of change that program activities directly seek to mobilize more resources and allocate them to citizens' service priorities; with more funds for health services, a facility may be able to hire more qualified staff and procure equipment or supplies to deliver higher quality care, which would contribute to improved health outcomes.

In several instances among programs we reviewed, the theory of change and program design acknowledged the importance of institutionalizing the service delivery improvements in governance structures and processes, for example through a sectoral ministry or local governance budgeting process. In an integrated theory of change, the system strengthening work of governance can improve the accountability and ultimately sustainability of service improvements.

Respondents often spoke of using output indicators and measuring direct, immediate results of project activities, rather than longer-term outcomes of services. In the previous example, such an output indicator would be funding budgeted for local health services, intending to measure the first step in the theory of change. In this example, the governance program intentionally avoids measuring or claiming attribution for more people getting better care but seeks to explain the underlying theory of change for how governance contributes to sector outcomes.

Our analysis of interview respondents and project monitoring, evaluation, and learning (MEL) activities demonstrates the importance of clearly spelling out a theory of change for how governance is linked to anticipated outcomes. Not only does an explicit theory of change help the project define indicators for measurement and reporting, but it also helps tell the story of integrated governance's impact on services (see Box 3 for the experience of USAID/

Uganda GAPP). Nonetheless, the bureaucratic requirements of USAID funding rules mean that sectors have indicators on which they must report (e.g., PEPFAR or the President's Malaria Initiative), and if these sectors contribute funding to an integrated governance program budget, they often wish to see data from the program that demonstrate a contribution to their indicators. Discussed further below, several project staff we interviewed made recommendations for the way integrated governance programs can respond to the challenge of measuring a contribution to sectoral outcomes.

Success Factors

In an effort to identify applications based on our key findings, our research team identified several integrated governance success factors for donors that are interested in funding integrated governance programs and the organizations that implement them. For this discussion, we consider success as achieving the objectives of the program. We identified these factors through the document review, particularly final evaluations, and in analyzing the responses of interviewees on their perspective of what made programs successful.

Contextual readiness factors are important in design

Though the influence of the broader context came up often, our interviewees expressed differing opinions about the ideal conditions for integrated governance programming. They described examples of programs that worked in challenging political environments (such as Burma and the Democratic Republic of the Congo) and those that succeeded in more economically developed and democratically open countries (such as Indonesia and Senegal). One COP spoke of the more developed contexts having "*policies, laws, etc. that spell out the aspects of integrated governance,*" and several respondents tied progress on decentralization to the contextual impetus for integrated governance programming focused on local government service provision. Relatedly, one project management respondent pointed to the benefit of having "*CSOs and communities who understand [their role in integrated governance]*" and are ready to engage in meaningful change. In addition to

Table 5. Conditions and factors facilitating integrated governance programming

Essential Conditions	Accelerating Factors
• Absence of widespread violent conflict	• Government has a degree of accountability
• Incipient formal governance system	• Citizens perceive they have influence with government
• A degree of social cohesion	• Civil society has ability and constituent credibility
• Existence of citizen and government engagement	• A roadmap for political reform/decentralization exists
• Some capacity to mobilize resources for development	• Public financial management system is functioning

uncovering contextual factors, the 13 integrated governance programs we reviewed spanned countries with a range of contextual conditions, including political environments, economic systems, and civic engagement.

Our analysis of the projects and interviews leads us to believe that there may be some essential conditions (minimum contextual elements) and accelerating factors (elements that made integrated governance success more likely) to consider when deciding whether a country is "ready" or will facilitate the success of integrated governance programming (Table 5).

This collection of conditions and factors is neither definitive nor comprehensive. We found that there are, in fact, some instances where integrated governance may be the most effective way to strengthen fundamental governance systems and processes within even some of the most closed political contexts. In some of these environments, sector governance programming may not be welcome, in which case an integrated governance program that explicitly seeks to provide better services by stealthily strengthening governance systems could be the best way to make improvements to governance. One USAID respondent pointed to good integrated governance work in lower capacity countries like Guinea. Clarifying facilitative conditions and exploring readiness in more depth represent areas for future research. Furthermore, beyond country context, we discuss below the important role of donor enabling features that has a significant influence over success. As we explored previously, the trajectory of integrated governance today in varied contexts, accompanied by research on how integrated governance contributes to sectoral outcomes, could shed further light on readiness factors.

Infusing learning and adaptation approaches contributes to successful integrated governance programs

Specific attention to the way an integrated governance program was designed, and the techniques and approaches used in implementation, was a clear theme in our interviews and document review. Our study found that using applied political economy analysis (PEA) and thinking and working politically (TWP) approaches supported USAID missions in the design phase, facilitated stakeholder engagement and aligning varied interests, and enabled implementing organizations to effectively adapt during implementation. Applied PEA is a methodology that enables development professionals to uncover incentives, challenges, and opportunities and potential solutions to difficult development problems. TWP takes this approach one step further by embedding PEA approaches throughout design and everyday project implementation.[28] Several USAID officers referenced the increased use of TWP, PEA, and adaptive management tools more broadly as elements that have contributed to the growth and operationalization of integrated governance. In the words of one USAID officer, "*PEA is a particularly useful tool to open up the questions around integrated governance…going from 'governance matters' to 'how will we address that?'*" Eight projects in our review conducted a PEA or used a PEA approach in their implementation, and multiple external evaluations referenced the utility of that approach in adapting to changing priorities and contexts. This way of thinking and working in more political ways—more localized and contextually informed—with implementation driven by learning and adaption was cited as a success factor for these programs.

This emphasis on adaptive implementation aligns closely with the community of scholars and practitioners that is exploring "doing development differently."[29] It reflects research that demonstrates how applied PEA can be a valuable approach for understanding contextual issues, intervention opportunities, and stakeholder engagement. Previous RTI research has shown that applied PEA can positively contribute to technical interventions and foster a TWP mindset within the project team and donor counterparts.[30] Our interview respondents and project documents in this study reinforced this observation, attributing the use of PEA and TWP to successful integrated governance programs.

Another theme from our interviews centered around the collaborating, learning, and adapting (CLA) approach, which USAID introduced in 2012.[31] A clear trend in our interviews was the way programs emphasize learning and collaboration at the forefront of the design and implementation of the program. Several respondents spoke of the importance of starting with listening (indeed, the foundation to most strong programming) to USAID local staff, local stakeholders, and related local or international programs to learn their priorities and then designing the integrated governance program to actively support all actors to achieve their goals. This learning orientation relates to the frequently cited aim of integrated governance to leverage or boost the work of others, rather than compete with them. Multiple interviewees emphasized that integrated governance programming works best when designed to invite each donor-funded program, government entity, sectoral ministry, or service provider, to contribute their expertise and combine assets to produce something greater than the sum of its parts.

Collaboration tools that could be useful include activities that align shared goals, co-planning and co-implementing activities, sharing resources such as office space or staff, and specific platforms such as thematic cross-sectoral working groups for key staff (COPs, M&E, Communications and Gender Equity and Social Inclusion). Nine of the 13 programs reviewed explicitly included a CLA approach in their implementation. For example, USAID/Malawi invested in a heavily collaborative approach among implementers, including a USAID-

organized integration "speed dating" event where they learned about all the projects. Several programs have been recognized by USAID for their outstanding performance in CLA, and *all* the programs we reviewed cited CLA as one of the strengths in their implementation. These findings support past research that adaptive management practices can strengthen international development programming[32] and suggest several critical aspects of integrated governance for which PEA, TWP, and collaborative approaches are essential.

Two reasons emerge to explain why these approaches are crucial.

First, working within existing structures and systems to deliver locally relevant, contextually tailored support for community priorities requires a high level of adaptation within target geographies. Many integrated governance programs support government and CSO stakeholders to plan and act on their locally identified priorities. This means adapting to each location and not delivering the same support or achieving the exact same results with each partner. For example, one community might define WASH as a top priority and their integrated governance program supports the government in investing in a new water source, whereas another community wishes to improve health worker absenteeism and therefore launches improved social accountability initiatives.

Second, an adaptive approach enables the integrated governance program to work effectively with diverse stakeholders. With an adaptive lens, an integrated governance program can respond to sector priorities within donor agencies, such as when a USAID mission education office hopes local governance can contribute by strengthening local education committees. An integrated governance program that prioritizes learning-focused, flexible systems can more easily respond, for example, when a health office asks for results contributing to the health sector, and the MEL team can disaggregate local government budget allocation per service area. As Box 4 shows, robust attention to collaboration within the adaptive approach facilitates interaction with other sector programs and stakeholders, such as local units of devolved sectoral ministries.

Box 4. Going Further Together in Senegal

"Alone one goes fast, together we go far." (Proverb)

Donor-supported and rewarded integration of multiple projects has the potential for leveraging outcomes at scale. Not only do multiple programs share plans and ideas, but they can also achieve more results than individual actions can when they combine expertise and resources. USAID/Senegal GOLD is a governance project that actively integrates and collaborates with sector projects. In southern Senegal, GOLD partners with three USAID health programs, allowing all partners to jointly plan interventions, co-create diagnostics and other tools, and share the cost of training and technical assistance. The USAID/Senegal Mission enabled this work by encouraging collaboration between the four projects. As a result, the four programs joined forces to support local governments (communes) to develop 2020 health sector plans, launch a far-reaching malaria control awareness raising campaign, replicate technical training to health officials, and conduct advocacy workshops for CSOs working on improving health services for women. This joint planning and intentional coordination allowed more communities to receive more comprehensive technical assistance and material support than if the groups had worked in isolation.[33]

Supportive donor policies, procedures, and people pave the way

Our study found that the role of the donor strongly influences both success and challenges in integrated governance programming. Four key observations emerged from our document review and interviews.

First, USAID policy supports integrated governance. The 2013 DRG Strategy contains a specific strategic objective: "Improve development outcomes through the integration of DRG principles and practices across USAID's development portfolio."[10] Since 2013, USAID established and expanded an integration division within the DRG Center to work in collaboration with other bureaus. The strategy, the new integrated governance division, and key issue reporting requirements encouraged the DRG Center, other sectors, and missions to expand the design, implementation, and learning about integrated governance programming.

Second, interviewees highlighted impediments related to Agency structures, procedures, and practices—supportive policies and people notwithstanding. This

represents a counterpoint to the first observation, where experiences contradict the support for integration in the written policy. Interviewees often referenced interpersonal, political, and budgetary dynamics as barriers to more and better integrated governance programming. One USAID staffer reported *"the way USAID is structured, and budgets are apportioned creates competition for resources and bureaucratic rivalries."*

Third, project staff spoke of the value in having a Contract or Agreement Officer's Representative who is "on your side." One integrated governance COP was thankful that his Agreement Officer's Representative centralized all sector office communication and reports through him so that the COP was not perpetually responding to sector queries and activity requests. Such supportive USAID officers help implementers set limits and commitments to other sectors, represent the governance program results to Mission leadership and staff, believe that long-term systemic change will contribute to sectoral outcomes, and understand the limitations of integrated governance.

Fourth, the level of USAID Mission understanding, interest, and support sets the stage for whether to pursue integration and enable its success. Interviewees consistently noted the positive role of mission directors, DRG office directors, and other sector office priorities and leadership. One COP cited the need for "*internal mechanisms for cross sector offices coordination,*" within USAID to leverage contributions from various sectors and to encourage collaboration across offices and implementing partners and strong relationships between donor leadership and government counterparts. One notable example is USAID/Malawi's efforts to promote integration, stemming from the Country Development Cooperation Strategy (CDCS) and operationalized through colocation, coordination, and collaboration.[25] Taken together, these findings point to the importance of internal donor systems that enable joint funding of integrated governance with a flexible focus on crosscutting governance indicators that measure capacity and system strengthening in other sectors.

It is important to understand the limits of integrated governance programming

As with most things, when integrated governance projects are spread too thin and beyond their core capacities, quality will suffer. Although a well-funded, well-designed integrated governance project can do many things, it cannot be all things to all people. This limitation was revealed in our review of the USAID/Uganda Strengthening Decentralization for Sustainability project. After a slow start, the project embarked on an exceptionally successful path of building fundamental governance capacity in areas such as citizen engagement, planning, and financial management while developing local health service delivery in 35 municipalities. The host government and USAID stakeholders were so pleased with the combined governance and sector outcomes that they increased the project budget and scope to include three new areas: recruitment of government health workers, integration of WASH activities in three of the districts, and a new education support initiative including early grade reading in four districts. As a result, the project was stretched too thin, asked to work beyond its staff expertise, and faced challenges executing the newly added scope while maintaining its initial governance and sector activities.[24]

We also heard from both USAID and implementer respondents that they intentionally protect the integrity of their projects by not overpromising sector activities, sector reporting to multiple offices, and sector impact indicators. This keeps projects focused and successful in meeting their original objectives, strengthening governance and planned and opportunistic efforts to coordinate, collaborate, and leverage resources across multiple sector projects. This counterpoint to the earlier recommendation on contributing to sector indicators reminds us of the healthy debate, and often contradictory approaches, to claiming contribution of impact.

Conclusions

This study of integrated governance programs and interviews of donors and practitioners offers a sample of experience, a report of our findings, and our research team's analysis of integrated governance programming success factors. Our analysis of three variations of integrated governance programming includes the emphasis of citizen and government collaboration and a systems approach to improve service delivery sustainably, interventions that serve as the glue between sectors, and the balancing act of indicators to measure contribution to sectoral outcomes. Combined, these offer a framework for design and implementation of future programs. Our findings on the way—contextual readiness, learning and adapting approaches, donor support, and the limitations of integrated governance programming—offer guidance to those designing and implementing current and future integrated governance programming. We conclude our effort with recommendations for integrated governance programming and concluding thoughts on the way forward.

Recommendations

Donors are best positioned to encourage integrated activities among projects

Although most respondents talked about the importance of project coordination, the integrated governance program staff provided concrete detail on the importance and methods of donor support of this effort. In several projects, actual coordination requirements such as joint work planning, shared calendars, and joint geographic selection were included in implementing partner contracts. From our donor respondents, we heard that recognizing collaboration publicly encourages implementing partners to look for more creative opportunities for activity integration.

Learn the language of the sectors

This includes fully understanding key terminology, concepts, and trends in multiple sectors. For example, a governance specialist walks into a clinic and sees "citizens" whereas a health person sees "patients." When communicating the effects of integrated

governance in a sector, integrated governance staff benefit from using terms common to that sector to speak about the tangible results. The importance of integrated governance staff learning sector language was also highlighted in USAID's DRG Integration Study.[11]

Greater clarity and consistency on what constitutes integrated governance could help drive the field forward

Given the three variations of integrated governance we found in reviewing project documentation and through the interviews, the following need additional attention: integrated governance terms need to be defined, additional evidence for the efficacy of integrated governance projects needs to be developed, and new tools and methods for integrated governance need to be designed.

Leverage success for deeper, sustained, and best value impact

In talking with integrated governance implementers, we heard often that success begets success, including COVID-19 messaging in Senegal, transparency app sharing in Guatemala, and capitalizing and sharing core skills of sector experts in Malawi. These leveraging cases, where 1+1 = 3 and the whole is greater than the sum of its parts, demonstrate the value of integration and how governance projects, or other sector projects can pilot a tool, draw on stakeholder relationships, or create capacity that can then be scaled and furthered by other projects.

Focus on integrated governance programs' contributions to progress in sectors, not attribution of impact

Our findings pointed to the significant challenge for integrated governance programs in measuring and communicating their contribution to service delivery or specific-sector outcomes. One recommendation from integrated governance program staff is to strive to include indicators of interest to sectors that measure capacity and system strengthening: for example, strengthening the management or operational capacity of a sector-focused committee or oversight body or allocating government funds to services within a sector. Custom indicators such as

these can measure contribution to sector outcomes (such as improved extension services provided by the government) rather than the long-term end result of interest in a sector (such as increased crop yield).

Build a strong, integrated team from top leadership and throughout the team

Our interviewees offered recommendations for the characteristics of effective management of integrated governance programs. The role of the COP is critical in setting the tone for innovation, outward facing engagement, and openness to adaptation. The COP should also be politically savvy and understand the country, political, economic, and sector contexts deeply. Achieving success on a sector program is hard enough, but leading the implementation of governance programming that contributes to more sustainable outcomes across sectors requires the ability to work from within to influence the current system. This calls for someone who understands the donor, uses optimal ways to engage stakeholders at all levels, has the ability to build relationships, and emphasizes a collaborative and adaptive implementation approach.

A successful COP is able to build and manage a multi-disciplinary and collaborative team where individuals take initiative and are accountable and where technical experts and partners are trusted with key decisions and investments. Thinking beyond skill sets, personalities are also important. A successful integrated governance team prioritizes relationship building, is passionate about the integrated governance path, and readily adapts activities as needed.

Implications and Concluding Thoughts

We offer the following concluding thoughts, which highlight the promise of integrated governance and some persisting challenges. Based on the previous recommendations, we see the implications of acting on these to be the following:

Governance and other sector specialists increasingly recognize that an integrated approach that includes both governance processes and sector services for citizens contributes to holistic, long-lasting development

The research showed that many sector specialists appreciate that the governance toolkit can indeed be usefully employed to contribute to outcomes in other sectors. As a senior USAID governance staff member said to us, *"if you're pursuing the same sector reforms that you tried 15 to 20 years ago and you're not seeing results, you've got a governance problem not a technical sectoral one."* Likewise, governance specialists increasingly embrace the importance of contributing to sector results and service provision for citizens. This concept is sometimes articulated in the phrase, "democracy that delivers."

Still, it is evident in our findings that many operational and structural barriers to achieving effective integration remain in place. Thus, we encourage the development community to build on the success factors and recommendations while continuing to experiment, share, and learn. As the research demonstrates, the promise of integrated governance can deliver value to citizens by linking intervention design, implementation, and evaluation.

Attention to governance as a contributor to sustainable development has opened the door to donor country strategies that combine short-term sector targets with longer-term systemic reform

However, without effective governments and supportive state–society relations, no sector-specific investments are safe from deteriorating over time or evaporating in a crisis. Integrating governance is one strategy for avoiding such declines. The current focus on sustainability, local ownership, and long-term systemic change calls for an increased attention to the integration of governance and other sector programming.

Our experience and research suggest that integrating governance and sector programming offers a valuable approach for producing systemic governance improvements and contributing to other sectoral outcomes. Future research and implementation can continue exploring factors of successful integrated programming, measurement approaches, and the evolution of integrated governance programming. It is important for the international development research and practitioner community to continue learning on this vital topic.

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