



RESEARCH REPORT

How and Why Practitioners Think and Work Politically

Evidence from Chemonics Programming Across Sectors

DECEMBER 2022 | RENEE KANTELBERG, JENNIFER SWIFT-MORGAN, AND BRYCE WATSON

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Executive Summary

Chemonics' history of implementing donor-funded development programs began in Mali in 1975. In the nearly five decades since then, we have worked in more than 150 additional countries worldwide and across every major development sector. Our experience — including knowledge-sharing and collaboration with donors and other stakeholders — has demonstrated the value of proactively and consistently attending to the political interests and other dynamics that continually reshape each project's operating environment. Throughout our work, we adapt programming to remain responsive to its evolving contexts.

This understanding and practice align with the practical paradigm known as *thinking and working politically (TWP)* — a paradigm that has sparked considerable discussion in the development community for more than a decade. Practitioners of TWP see a project's implementers as political actors influencing the project's political context. TWP entails carefully considering that context and how project interventions might affect it, then adapting the interventions to best advance common objectives within the local system.

Most development practitioners, not just Chemonics, have long recognized that deep contextual knowledge is crucial to understanding how projects interact with their local systems and, in turn, to navigating these systems. Moreover, this knowledge must complement projects' technical solutions, or they will fall flat and may even undercut project objectives as they clatter down. What, then, explains practitioners' particular interest in TWP as an explicit strategy and more than just "doing good development"?

This report responds to that question and to the many calls for a more comprehensive picture of TWP by presenting new evidence of the various forms that TWP may take in practice. The evidence comes from a 2022 study that Chemonics undertook to foster more robust learning about TWP.

Specifically, we closely examined Chemonics-implemented projects that used or are using various forms of TWP in nine countries: Bangladesh, Iraq, Mozambique, the Philippines, Pakistan (see photo), Syria, Timor-Leste, and Tunisia. In conducting the study, we interviewed multiple staff from these projects. We complemented what we learned from these projects with a review of eight additional Chemonics-



Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Revenue Mobilization (KPRM) staff and stakeholders in dialogue in Pakistan

implemented projects applying TWP that had received dedicated support from Chemonics' Center for Politically Informed Programming (the Center). We consider these findings alongside those of the recent (2022) USAID-Chemonics study on political economy analysis (PEA) usage to identify and articulate what is different and more effective about PEA processes and TWP practices that have received more support.

Findings

While corroborating many findings from other studies on TWP and the trends TWP practitioners regularly discuss, this study illuminates several additional key findings, notably:

- There are different manifestations of both thinking politically and working politically.
- Certain factors tend to make these efforts more valuable.
- These cases of TWP collectively provide lessons learned from challenges and successes.
- These cases collectively indicate that applied political economy analysis (APEA) and TWP have a beneficial impact on project activities, increasing their sustainability — potentially beyond the life of the project.

Details on these topline findings about TWP include the following.

Thinking Politically

- *Projects go about "thinking politically" in many similar ways and in some different ways.* They are using diverse tools and methods to do PEA and related context analysis. Some methods did not include robust qualitative field research, but they still generated important analyses, according to project leaders. Project team members' direct involvement in APEA design and data collection also varies widely across projects. In rare cases, projects are formally and consistently integrating political and other contextual analysis into their ongoing monitoring, evaluation, and learning (MEL) and collaborating, learning, and adapting (CLA) processes and team culture. A few projects even "think politically" in highly iterative, adaptive, and participative ways with local actors.
- *Study results suggest that three interconnected factors contribute to and encourage thinking politically.* These factors are 1) the design and approach of the APEA; 2) the internal dynamics of the project and staff; and 3) the external dynamics of partners and relationships. In particular, APEAs are more useful when focused on priority questions or issues that a project must better understand to achieve its objectives. Also critical is the willingness and ability of the project leadership and management teams and donor managers to dedicate time and other resources to provide hands-on practical support.
- *The depth of the analysis matters.* Different approaches to APEA and related exercises are most valuable for examining questions of power, influence, and incentives and identifying potential ways to help achieve project objectives that are in the common interest. When this fundamental purpose of thinking politically remains in focus, project teams are empowered to transform thinking in multiple ways, succeed in generating change, and clearly articulate how to make change happen.

Working Politically

- *Projects work politically in many different ways, employing different strategies, activities, and tactics that depend on the moment and issue needing attention.* Fewer projects updated internal tools, such as theories of change based on PEA and ongoing learning, but all projects adjusted activities to shift incentives as needed or take advantage of temporary opportunities. In addition, most projects leveraged and cultivated relationships with stakeholders in new informal and formal ways. For example, the projects fostered these relationships through regular informal dialogue as well as by holding formal meetings or convening different groups of stakeholders around common issues and agenda setting. The projects also supported government stakeholders in thinking through how to be more inclusive of citizen organizations and community groups often excluded from planning and decision-making about matters affecting them. While cultivating these relationships, the projects ensured that their vested interests and implementing strategies aligned with system actors' interests and inputs much as possible. All projects intertwined more informal daily PEA through formal and informal activities integrated into routine staff practice.
- *Several overlapping factors contribute to project teams working politically and to the effectiveness of those efforts.* These include 1) senior leadership that understands the value of TWP and enables it through a combination of formal processes, less formal practice, and culture within the project teams; 2) staff engagement and facilitative skills (not just technical skills) to build relationships with partners and those resistant to change; 3) donor support to TWP and regular PEAs depending on the context to inform project decision-making and effectiveness; 4) staff capabilities, systems, motivation, and contractual flexibility to manage challenges and contextual risks as they arise and then adapt as needed and to use evidence and information as they arise and to adapt and inform programming accordingly; 5) staff leveraging or developing a wide range of networks and stakeholder connections, with deep relationships; and 6) staff capacity to integrate learning and analysis to adapt specific project work and technical activities as relevant contextual, institutional, or other changes occur.
- *Relationships matter and contribute to sustainability and the immediate ability to get things done.* The technical aspects of projects may be a challenge to implement, but stakeholder relationships may prove just as challenging for various contextual reasons (e.g., if the recipient partner, such as a ministry, is resistant to the reforms the project aims to advance). Navigating the networks of people relevant to the change process is part of the work and often gets in the way of implementing technical aspects to reform systems. All project staff understand that the institutions the project partners with and the people in them will last beyond the life of the project and are, therefore, key to the interventions' sustainability.

Impacts and Benefits of Thinking Politically and Working Politically

All projects involved in this study attest to the value and impact of TWP. The project staff have adapted to their local context and started new ways of working or pivoted to activities requiring political thinking and strategy. On most projects, there was a relationship between

how staff approached APEA and engaged in TWP more broadly, as the practice of analysis and working politically are interconnected. Specifically, the value and impact of TWP that we observed included the following benefits.

- Work planning became more aligned with the local political economy — given the emphasis on stakeholders — and increased support for locally led development.
- Opportunities *to promote change* became apparent along with the power, interests, and dynamics of local actors and the related potential of different partnerships
- Key project staff started to recognize that they were not just implementing a donor-funded project in their country but that they could influence and support local development actors in shifting behaviors and systems to achieve reform objectives.
- Projects identified government institutions and other actors that were not originally identified as primary partners but demonstrated the capacity, opportunity, and motivation to promote reform objectives.
- In some cases, a greater understanding of power, equality, and exclusion helped shape how project staff worked politically for policy advocacy and engagement, building common agendas, formal networks, and strategies.
- In other cases, engaging in thinking politically with local stakeholders became an act of working politically through relationships beneficial to achieving shared objectives.

So What?

Our subsequent discussion focuses on the real heart of the matter: how to practice TWP that supports locally driven, sustained change. We argue that doing so effectively requires recognizing goal complexity — the multiple, often competing, goals that the individuals and organizations in a given political context may simultaneously pursue. This recognition, in turn, facilitates a more meaningful, lasting alignment around shared interests and a greater appreciation of interconnected, mutual aims. In practice, the process helps project staff increasingly understand that local actors, especially change agents, are already undertaking their own forms of TWP. With this understanding, project staff can better mobilize existing and potential local assets to support locally defined and driven reform.

Recommendations

We make six recommendations for improving the application of TWP based on these factors, additional reflections, our recent experimentation with new methods, and ongoing exchanges within and beyond the TWP Community of Practice. The following six practices include ways of thinking and working politically that foster greater development impact and sustainability by considering the greater political economy of traditional international assistance and helping to shift from international programming to peer-based cooperation and the promotion of new systems of locally defined and led reform.

1. **Invest in precise, actionable questions, including ones that examine assets, not just problems.** We know, based on the experience of our project staff and TWP specialists,

that the ultimate value of an APEA or other context analysis exercise depends in large part on the very first step: the questions. How well the inquiry focuses on the project's top priority or targeted reform *and* what staff and others do not already deeply understand determines much of the exercise's later usefulness and applicability. It may seem intuitive not to spend time or money on something that is not important or that people already know, but projects have done so in the past and may continue to do so unless teams invest in background research, serious thought, and deep dialogue with local staff, and often local partners, to agree on the questions at the heart of the matter. Similarly, the usefulness and applicability of contextual analysis depend on including field research to complement system, stakeholder, or network mapping; the questions posed to the participants in the exercise should still be as targeted as possible.

Although TWP advisors have long recommended problem-driven questions to focus on the specific issues the project aims to address — like why a given reform has long seemed intractable — solely focusing on problems and their root causes risks overlooking important assets and cases of positive deviance in a local system. A project can more quickly arrive at actionable insights into how to amplify, multiply, or expand such cases in the future by asking where they may be in the system and why and how outlier reformers or high-performing units, or locales, do what they do.

2. **Balance and purposefully mix robust, explanatory research with operational, flexible, rapid, and informal exercises.** Our project teams already mix more formal APEA studies and other exercises, like stakeholder mapping, with continuous everyday PEA-type activities, like regular informal meetings that include key power brokers and influencers. Each serves its own purpose. Robust research with triangulation and analysis getting at the "why" of things is still important at the project or reform inception — or at inflection points facing major contextual shifts or opportunities for a deep review of an initiative's fundamental theory of change. Those who argue that such research takes too much time and money beg the question: What is the cost of *not* undertaking this analysis? The pursuit of major reform actions of long duration and large scale that fail to get at the root of the matter, leverage key local assets and support key change agents and coalitions, or acknowledge and address misaligned interests have always proven far more costly. This knowledge is at the heart of the repeated calls for longer project inception periods that allow for deeper inquiry and co-creation and for more flexible contractual mechanisms that allow for failing fast and adaptation.

However, projects should also encourage staff to employ targeted stakeholder and network analysis when needed to map the landscape of actors and their relationships, as the Manahel project in Syria did; daily PEAs, like POTENCIAR staff did in Mozambique via the WhatsApp groups that discussed the latest media and other analyses; and ongoing informal conversations with power brokers and other contacts, as nearly all the projects we interviewed did.

3. **Close the gap between APEA insights and action, and between institutions and individuals, with behavioral science.** Even when projects or reformers do conduct highly focused and robust APEA, myriad complex findings may prove overwhelming. Teams

often struggle to see how to apply those findings to the alignment of interests and to the identification of potential ways forward — at both the institutional and individual levels. Identifying this challenge, Chemonics recently began experimenting with combining TWP and behavior change approaches, feeding the results of APEAs into a behavioral model that identifies where to target actors' capabilities, opportunities, or motivations at the individual and institutional levels. This [actor-based change framework](#) takes on system complexity but quiets the noise in highly practical ways, illuminating the possible ways to achieve behavior change and align interests across the system to bring about the desired reforms. Combined with change space analysis to identify which initiatives are likely to be politically and technically feasible at any one time, this APEA-informed behavioral framework may be a key link between thinking politically and working politically.

4. **Support the many ways of working politically, including explicit, purposeful investment in relationships and in real space and time for testing and iteration.** The findings consistently emphasize the importance of relationships. The cynical view misunderstands this approach as one that simply entails leveraging — or, really, exploiting — personal contacts for institutional gain in projects. Instead, the approach requires ethical or truly effective relationship building in the name of cooperation around shared objectives and in support of local reform leadership. Relationships between project staff and local actors — and between local actors themselves — must start with a deeper appreciation of mutual goal complexity and the assets everyone brings to the table. Project leaders and donors must encourage and support these relationships, which can then be nurtured in multiple evidence-based ways to build trust around sincere common interests — such as by sharing decision-making processes, avoiding surprises, sharing successes, and working iteratively ([Proud, 2020](#)).

Working iteratively — with space to test and fail — is another key aspect of working politically that needs to be much more supported and incentivized in practice, not just in theory. We agree with the repeated calls for greater contractual flexibility and support to try solutions without severe penalties — that is, to see "failure" during purposeful testing as an opportunity for learning. Whether through problem-driven iterative adaptation or more design-inspired processes of prototyping, supporting project and local actors' experimentation with emerging solutions and enabling them to evolve and adapt in real time must be a key part of doing development differently.

5. **Formally integrate TWP into MEL and CLA processes, with resources and incentives to adhere to these processes.** This study has shown the importance of institutionalizing TWP into project and reformer practice so that TWP is no longer optional while giving teams the resources to do this work, creating systematic routines and pathways for channeling insights into adaptive action. These MEL and CLA actions include, for example, regular combined assessments of political context, behavioral, conflict, climate, and gender and inclusion analysis; regular updates of stakeholder mapping, especially at inflection points during elections and other leadership changes; and annual reviews of project or reform

theory of change in relation to these updated insights and with the contract's results framework.

- 6. Support local TWP for true locally led development.** As the previous chapter's discussion of study findings attests, there are ways that the international and national staff of international development projects can apply TWP purposely to support the TWP that local change agents in these contexts are already conducting and thereby target the most transformative outcomes possible. Additional opportunities may arise for projects to strengthen the capabilities, opportunities, and motivations of these change agents to use deep analysis to devise their own politically savvy approaches. As donors call for localization and seek to promote a shift from programs to progress by prioritizing local leadership and by diminishing the roles of traditional international development projects, cooperation around TWP in the name of locally defined, driven, and sustained reform will significantly advance these goals.

The cases in this study collectively illuminate TWP's ability to increase project activities' beneficial impact and sustainability. We share these recommendations with our fellow practitioners in the TWP Community of Practice and other development colleagues with the hope of contributing to and helping to sustain thoughtful discussions about TWP that generate meaningful work.

1. Background and Methodology

Most international development practitioners have long agreed that deep contextual knowledge is vital to understanding how politics affect development efforts in different places and, in turn, to navigating these environments effectively. Technical approaches alone are insufficient for this work. For some practitioners, the necessity of continually integrating knowledge of a project's political context into technical implementation is a "[second orthodoxy](#)." This community prioritizes TWP throughout the project life cycle. But what does TWP as a practice really entail?

“Evidence tells us that political factors are usually more important in determining development impact than the scale of aid funding or the technical quality.”

— The TWP Community of Practice

There have been a few attempts to establish a comprehensive understanding of TWP. Still, many have called for more research to unpack what TWP entails in different circumstances, the impacts of these approaches, and the factors that help or hinder these efforts.

In this report, we aim to contribute to more systematic learning and documentation of these experiences. We present key research findings on the practice of TWP, including the recent (2022) study by USAID and Chemonics on USAID contractors' procurement and use of APEA.

The report builds on this prior research with the findings of an additional study that Chemonics also undertook on TWP in 2022. We wanted to better understand the research findings on TWP — including what Chemonics' project teams worldwide have experienced in their use of APEA — by examining the precise ways Chemonics' teams are practicing TWP, the conditions that enable them to do so, their challenges and lessons learned, and how the teams' approaches affect their efforts' sustainability and ability to achieve important development goals (see box).

APEA and TWP

APEA is an approach typically comprising ongoing qualitative field research to understand the dynamics between and among people and institutions in a project's operating environment. The analysis assesses what sociopolitical, cultural, and economic incentives and constraints affect the behavior of actors in a given system. Understanding these influences enables practitioners to develop, execute, and adapt a politically savvy approach to achieving public interest goals.

TWP uses this political insight into the project's context to respond to the power dynamics, local systems, and actors in a given system. Practitioners seek to build coalitions of actors around shared objectives to achieve results that are in the public interest. TWP encourages smaller, iterative actions and requires remaining highly flexible to adapt to changing dynamics and evidence of what seems to be working or not.

Sources: Rocha Menocal, 2018; PACT, 2014

These project teams have led dozens of USAID and U.K. government-funded projects in sectors ranging from governance to water, education, economic growth, biodiversity, and beyond. The research questions for this study focused on the following:

- What factors contribute to effectively thinking politically through APEA?
- What factors contribute to effectively working politically, as informed by APEA?
- What is the value and impact of TWP?
- How can international development practitioners best support projects to do effective TWP?

Recent Research Findings on the Practice of TWP

Several papers and discussions have investigated the practice and value of PEA and TWP over the last decade, often encouraged by the global TWP Community of Practice, whose secretariat is funded in part by the United Kingdom's Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO).

Teskey. Graham Teskey, co-chair of the TWP Community of Practice Steering Committee, recently reviewed definitions of TWP, the evolution of the community of TWP practitioners, how TWP compares to traditional development practice, and key takeaways in his 2021 paper *TWP: What have we learned since 2013*. The paper emphasizes the flexible and adaptive nature of TWP and the need for an enabling environment to encourage TWP and make it effective. Teskey reiterates a common refrain among TWP advocates: Donors need to turn spoken support of flexible and adaptable approaches into contractual flexibility and a "more enlightened approach to program logic." He also calls for expanding the application of TWP to additional sectors and urgent "issues of our time." Finally, he urges TWP practitioners to generate evidence and document more examples of TWP's effective use.

Laws and Marquette. Teskey builds on a 2018 paper by Ed Laws and Heather Marquette, *Reviewing the evidence on the integration of politics into development practice over the past decade*, which examines the TWP "evidence" base at the time. Laws and Marquette note that they have found little evidence on what constitutes good practice for TWP and recommend more research into TWP's applications and effectiveness. They also argue that the staff of donors and other implementing organizations in international development should see their programming itself as a political process within a complex context and need greater capacity to navigate the context through TWP to influence change.

Pact. Contractors, in addition to Chemonics, implementing international assistance have also examined their use of PEA and other elements of TWP. For instance, Pact has invested in ongoing learning pertinent to applying PEA. One key 2019 paper, *Putting the "Applied" in Political Economy Analysis: Reflections and recommendations on operationalizing APEA*, highlights common findings that corroborate the longstanding experience of Chemonics and others: APEA is most relevant when project staff are included in the process. Pact also shares challenges, including that APEA risks perpetuating power dynamics if those involved do not receive explicit guidance on gender equality and social inclusion (GESI) and that

project teams do not necessarily use APEAs to make key decisions. Pact notes the value project teams have found in mapping out stakeholders and power dynamics and recommends applying this information to program strategies developed with local actors. Pact's research also discusses factors that contribute to TWP, a discussion that again reflects common experiences and points of advocacy. These points include the value of building TWP into learning processes and intentional reviews and allowing for more formal inception periods so that projects have time for APEA that supports strategic decision-making and that integrates the PEA's learning into the project strategy and implementation plan.

RTI. Similarly, RTI International's 2020 paper on PEA examines the practice and value of PEA across several donor-funded projects that RTI implemented. The paper explains that PEA helps staff become more open to a TWP mindset and approach; that PEAs can assist in uncovering and addressing hidden power dynamics; and that explicitly linking PEA to TWP in project implementation facilitates adaptive management by informing decision-making on local issues and challenges in real time. Another important finding is that those planning PEAs should carefully consider logistics, staff availability, and team members' capacity.

USAID and Chemonics. The study that Chemonics and USAID (Rose & Watson, forthcoming) did on *Political Economy Analysis: Trends in USAID Procurement and Contractor Implementation*, which the Washington DC Working Group of the TWP Community of Practice organized, further illustrates what TWP entails in practice. Based on a quantitative analysis of PEA procurement trends and qualitative interviews with USAID and contractor management, this study shows clear evidence that some sectors — such as governance — emphasize PEA far more than others. This emphasis emanates from USAID missions with a long history of using PEA, like USAID/Colombia and USAID/Philippines.

The study also shows that senior management and project staff value PEAs, but PEAs may not always lead to TWP or be intended to do so. Most PEAs that Chemonics and USAID analyzed were intended to be conducted during a kind of inception period early in Year 1 to inform project strategy — consistent with Teskey's suggestions. However, early deadlines for work plans often made these early PEAs impossible because a PEA is a months-long process. Regardless, nearly all participants in the USAID-Chemonics study found that PEAs generally enhanced staff understanding of the context — or at the very least, helped get project staff on the same page regarding contextual factors. And although it was consistently challenging to arrange a PEA process to inform work planning, USAID and contractor management recognized that ongoing PEA — through project learning processes, such as regular, informal reflection meetings and quarterly assessments — could inform adaptation later.

The USAID-Chemonics study also considers other complexities of using PEAs and their effectiveness for projects. One is the tension between the rigor of a more traditional PEA methodology and the need for rapid, sometimes less structured approaches. Another is the tension between the team's desire to quickly unpack the who, what, and how of the systems in which the project works and guidance from USAID and others to carefully consider the why. The power to illuminate the why, as in "why things work the way they do," is what makes a PEA a PEA. This deep understanding can help ensure that projects focus on the right issues (e.g., root causes) and the critical stakeholders of a given development challenge.

However, the USAID-Chemonics study determines that different project teams are likely to use types of PEA tools differently, as RTI's 2020 study suggests. All this research reveals the need to explore several important questions, like what these different PEA approaches look like in detail, what factors support the forms of TWP that are most meaningful for project teams, and what the value and impact of that TWP actually is.

Methodology of This Study on TWP

These questions prompted us to undertake Chemonics' second 2022 study on TWP, the main focus of this report. While building on recent learning, we sought to provide additional empirical evidence on how large development projects across sectors conduct TWP, what factors lead to different practices of TWP, and what the initial indications of impact are.

The research we detail below also stems from an internal PEA that Chemonics' Center for Politically Informed Programming (the Center) conducted in 2019. The internal 2019 PEA reveals mixed incentives and uneven applications of TWP across the sectors and geographies worldwide that Chemonics' portfolio of programming encompasses — a finding that the statistics and qualitative insights of the 2022 USAID-Chemonics study corroborate. As part of Chemonics' internal PEA, Center staff interviewed dozens of Chemonics' project staff and U.S.-based project management and technical advisors. In addition, Center staff interviewed USAID/Washington and other USAID mission staff. One of the internal PEA's key findings is that the lack of sector-specific TWP guidance has left staff working in sectors beyond governance feeling less motivated to investigate questions about the political economy specific to their sectors. Still, the staff interviewed are generally interested in TWP, and many of their projects are or were contractually required to at least conduct a PEA.

The 2022 research that we primarily focus on in this report explores the diverse ways projects conduct APEA and TWP; the contributing factors supporting TWP; and the extent to which PEAs prove critical to the design of project objectives, strategies, activities, tactics, and the general practice of TWP. To gain this understanding, Center staff collaboratively designed a research framework with a TWP researcher. Between April and June 2022, the researcher conducted semi-structured interviews with staff from



Some of the most important stakeholders of the Syria Education Programme (Manahel)

projects in nine countries: Bangladesh, Iraq, Mozambique, the Philippines, Timor-Leste, Tunisia, Pakistan, and Syria (see photo). (The project in Tunisia had already closed, but the project lead agreed to speak with us.) These projects had received limited to no support from

the Center in relation to their TWP practice and, therefore, represented use cases that were less well known to the Center and that provided an opportunity to see how projects manage TWP with minimal guidance. The projects cover sectors ranging from accountability and governance to tourism, education, transition initiatives and social cohesion, public financial management, economic growth, water, water and sanitation, and natural resource management.

The researcher did a mix of one-on-one and group interviews with members of the project leadership teams, starting with chiefs of party for USAID projects or team leaders for FCDO programs. Then, the researcher interviewed technical advisors; monitoring, evaluation, and learning specialists; other staff and consultants; and project management directors in Chemonics' U.S. or U.K. offices who had been involved in the APEA process and, where existent, other aspects of TWP. For data analysis, qualitative data analysis software (Nvivo) supported the identification of common and outlier experiences around the research questions from the interview data.

Center staff complemented this aspect of the study with a systematic review of eight additional Chemonics-implemented projects applying TWP that had received dedicated support from the Center, including direct involvement in the design and execution of APEA studies and the application of their findings to refined project theories of change and interventions. This review examined how APEA and other aspects of TWP took shape within each project – i.e., how the projects conducted their analysis and politically informed strategies; the impact of TWP on project design; and lessons learned regarding both thinking politically and working politically. We weave these findings into this report's overall findings. We also consider these findings in relation to the findings of the USAID-Chemonics study on PEA usage, noting their similarities as well as what the studies suggest might be different in PEA processes and TWP practices that have received more support.

Overview of Findings

While aligning with many findings from other recent research on the practice of TWP and the trends TWP practitioners regularly discuss, this study illuminates and informs several additional key findings:

- There are different manifestations of both thinking politically and working politically.
- Certain factors tend to make these efforts more valuable.
- These cases of TWP collectively provide lessons learned, including from challenges and successes.
- These cases collectively indicate that APEA and TWP have a beneficial impact on project activities, increasing their sustainability — potentially beyond the life of the project.

See Annex A for a table of all Chemonics-implemented projects this study examined, including the activities and approaches they have used to think and work politically.

2. Thinking Politically: Manifestations and Factors

Ways of Thinking Politically

Projects go about "thinking politically" in many similar ways and in some different ways.

Overall, the top findings on what "thinking politically" looks like are 1) projects are using various tools and methods to do PEA and other related context analysis; 2) methods that did not include robust qualitative field research still generated important analysis according to project leaders; 3) project team members' direct involvement in APEA design and data collection varies widely across projects; 4) in rarer cases, projects are formally and consistently integrating political and other contextual analysis into their ongoing MEL and CLA processes and team culture; and 5) a small number of projects "think politically" in highly iterative, adaptive, and participative ways with local actors. We explain and provide examples for each of these findings below.

Projects use a variety of tools and methods in different combinations to think politically. The method projects still most commonly use to conduct APEAs is traditional qualitative field research. This qualitative research includes semi-structured interviews — and sometimes focus groups with different stakeholders and subject-matter experts per standard USAID and other PEA methodology — with some form of applied analysis with the compiled data. The foundational APEA processes we examined often included reviews of relevant reports and news media; stakeholder/network/ power/incentives and disincentive analysis exercises; conflict and gender analysis; problem and root-cause analysis; identification of barriers and drivers of change; and analyses and exercises to update theories of change based on these other analyses. Importantly, APEA in many, if not most, projects also includes ongoing, informal conversations with key local actors to gather information on the latest developments and better understand the underlying dynamics and interests at play.

Even in the absence of qualitative field research, project staff find value in other exercises. For example, the explicit deep dives into stakeholder analysis mapping in Syria, Mozambique, the Philippines, and Peru that we considered enabled staff to connect with each other and gain insights into whom to target and involve in specific project activities. Projects in Syria, Mozambique, and the Philippines found that using a theory of change analysis and reviewing it annually helped them understand the areas in which they needed to think more strategically, adapt, and consider changing some of their processes for engaging with partners and authorities to convene in a more effective way (see box, next page). For most projects, informal reflections and discussions on day-to-day issues in the ministries partnering with the project enabled staff to think about and sometimes adapt the course of action. The projects we interviewed in Pakistan, Tunisia, Timor-Leste, and all the other countries have formal reflections and learnings, but thinking politically often manifests in the day-to-day discussions among staff and stakeholders.

Project staff involved directly in APEA design and data collection varies widely. APEAs that were largely inclusive of staff during the gathering of data and use of specific tools (e.g., stakeholder analysis, power analysis, gender analysis, and influence and access analysis) supported staff in learning about contextual dynamics that they may have overlooked or not known about in detail.

AN ACTOR-BASED PEA IN SYRIA

Staff on the FCDO-funded Syria Education Programme (Manahel) identified a key question related to the challenging context affected by protracted conflict and great political upheaval: “Who can best develop and who can best implement education policies?” A child safeguarding policy was one such example; research showed teachers were using more corporal punishment than before the war. Manahel sought to reduce this school-based violence. Using a stakeholder analysis tool, Manahel staff looked at the people they needed to know to enforce the policy or a code of conduct. As the staff explained, “We came up with a specific actor base PEA. We chose our own way of doing it. We needed to make it relevant for our context as the dynamics are about individuals in the institutions. We needed to know who should be at the table on this issue and make something work. Applying a focused stakeholder analysis tool to the PEA helped us see all the people involved, not even people involved in education but people who can help with policy change and implementation. We looked at how all these stakeholders, including ourselves, can influence the system, sustain the impact of our outcomes of improving learning education for primary schools.’

Another tool the team used to support and integrate political thinking was its theory of change, which captured the team’s contextual analysis, particularly the political context. The process of analyzing root causes and change pathways as part of the theory of change led to identifying and conceptually addressing factors affecting government collapse, competition between various groups struggling for political and military power, potential scenarios concerning who might win and lose in relation to the realization of program objectives, and the Ministry of Education’s formal and informal roles in policy implementation.

The use of the stakeholder analysis exercise and the process of thinking through and developing the theory of change enabled the team to achieve a greater understanding of stakeholders’ relative interests, power, and relationships as well as additional contextual dynamics influencing education policy development and implementation. In addition, the analysis gave the staff the knowledge and understanding to think politically about how they would work politically and engage various individuals and groups involved in education policy and safeguarding.

A few projects consistently integrate ongoing APEA into MEL and CLA processes and team culture. POTENCIAR (which means *empower* in Portuguese) in Mozambique has created a project learning environment that promotes thinking politically among staff and systems. During past annual theory of change workshops, the team focused on the context, political challenges, and environment for accountability and responsiveness. Team members also assessed the project’s internal dynamics, considering what their own incentives might be, the interests they have as part of the project, and what capacity and networks are available internally to support change. Two important tools that support thinking politically and adaptation are the Test, Learn, Adapt Framework and POTENCIAR’s monitoring, research, evaluation, accountability, and learning (MREAL) strategy. The project’s analytical work brings in diverse actors to support thinking politically and localization from the viewpoint of the partners and communities it supports. For example, the provincial MREAL officer participates

in the health statistics working group to exchange information and analyze data with relevant actors linked to the provision of services to the most marginalized groups, as defined by POTENCIAR's GESI strategy — women (including widows and single mothers), youth (girls and boys), the elderly, people with disabilities, the LGBTI+ community, and groups facing discrimination based on their ethnicity and class, among others.

A few projects "think politically" in highly iterative, adaptive, and participative ways with local actors. In the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Revenue Mobilization (KPRM) project in Pakistan and the Delivering Effective Government for Competitiveness and Inclusive Growth (DELIVER) project in the Philippines, thinking politically has manifested in the use of result frameworks that require activities and targets to be pinned down in advance with the knowledge that these targets will often shift in response to contextual change. In Pakistan, the recent shift in leadership followed a change in specific ministry targets, and the project team members had to revise their thinking about whom to engage and where blockages were likely. They rethought their approaches without changing the results and theory of change. For both projects, thinking politically is an iterative, adaptive process that happens alongside regular cycles of action planning, monitoring of the context daily, and learning and reflection. Sustainability and working with the reality of change are embedded from the outset and encourage staff to develop knowledge, skills, and networks — particularly between stakeholders in ministries and citizen groups.

Factors for Promoting Thinking Politically

Results of this study suggest that three interconnected factors contribute to and encourage thinking politically: 1) the design and approach of the APEA; 2) the internal dynamics of the project and staff; and 3) the external dynamics of partners and relationships. Below, we outline each with additional findings.

The Design and Approach of APEA

Each APEA that the projects conducted supported staff in thinking politically and encouraged them to do so. This finding is similar to a finding in the USAID-Chemonics report: Staff members' contextual insight increases when staff participate in PEA throughout the project. We found that staff involved in a project's APEA from the design stage to the research phase and final analysis are empowered to think politically. (Different factors influence the usefulness of this thinking.) First, APEA is introduced to staff as a way to understand the current context and situation — particularly, the real root causes and interests preventing or driving change. APEA is also presented as a tool to support staff in becoming more politically savvy¹ about and aware of the dynamics that influence and align with their work.

¹ *Political savvy* is a term often used in the development sector when considering the political economy and TWP. To be politically savvy is to consider and understand the local context, how power operates and plays out in the context, who is involved in various ways, and who holds power and blocks or is open to reforms. To be politically savvy is to successfully navigate these aspects and the political dynamics of the specific institution or sector to accomplish the project's outcomes.

An example from the USAID-Chemonics report illustrates how not including staff throughout an APEA resulted in inefficiency because the design stage of the APEA could have better mapped the staff's current knowledge to avoid duplicative information gathering during the literature review and data collection. The project could have done more thorough problem mapping to identify what was already known, what were justified beliefs, and what was unknown or needed to be investigated for effective programming.

The APEA exercise requires staff to analyze and understand the realities of power relations that shape change in their country, the project's sector(s), and the project context and then use this political intelligence to inform their decision-making and implementation (working politically). This work includes the decisions that project teams make about which issues and partners to engage with and support and the decisions project partners make about ways to advance reform incrementally (discussed more below). The APEA provides teams the opportunity to understand the complexity of the context within which they work and identifies dynamics and stakeholders to help support implementation and strategies. The APEA process that digs into specific sector dynamics, issues, and problems and asks stakeholders questions related to these dynamics supports staff in their understanding of the realities of power and influence — going beneath the formal structures and broad knowledge staff have to reveal the underlying interests and incentives and the often-unspoken ways of doing things that enable or block change. This depth of analysis, along with staff involvement and stakeholder engagement, has been key to teams' ability to think politically, and it is central to effectively working politically.

FOCUSED PEAs

Focused, well-defined PEAs have at their core a clear set of questions relating to an overall research question or problem that the project wants to address. A narrow set of questions can generate a specific analysis applicable to the project's problem and focus. As the research highlights from the USAID-Chemonics report and this report, loosely defined, larger sets of research questions often generate information that people are already aware of; this information is less informative for project and activity design and implementation. Projects appreciate, to some degree, broader APEAs when they start — often a donor requirement — but most projects are taking requirements for a PEA and integrating aspects of the analysis into programming, treating the analysis as a living document and doing specific PEAs as the project evolves.

The precision of the inquiry and the specificity of research questions and analyses affect teams' ability to think politically in ways directly useful to the project (see box). Two projects had long lists of research questions, which became unhelpful. These projects learned that a cumbersome set of vague research questions does not reveal local nuances or support analysis that drills down to the level of sector-, issue-, and stakeholder-specific detail needed to best understand the operating context. Other projects — such as those in Mozambique, the Philippines, Syria, and Peru — had more time and ability to focus on analysis and specific research questions (COVID-19 gave some projects new opportunities to focus more deeply on certain work). These projects developed a more refined understanding of the local dynamics, specific stakeholders, and challenges they would need to factor into programming. The

USAID-Chemonics study found that most of the projects to receive technical assistance or subcontractor support that engaged the project teams in examining specific issues via fewer research questions produced a more robust PEA — a key factor in helping teams apply PEA findings. Our study generated similar findings.

Projects that involve staff in the PEA process secure more staff buy-in than projects that arrange for a small team of consultants familiar with politics to deliver the PEA as an inception exercise. When projects engaged consultants to deliver the PEA as an inception exercise, staff involvement was limited, and staff did not acquire the nuanced knowledge of the political context needed for thinking politically. As one staff technical advisor explained, "The PEA becomes more of a generic report with limited analysis and an academic exercise largely detached from staff." Although this view may not represent the perspectives of a majority of project staff, it is a valid take on the relevance of less inclusive forms of the PEA approach. The technical advisor's point also speaks to the findings of the USAID-Chemonics report, which noted that a project's APEA would have been more effective at the design stage had it included and mapped the staff's current knowledge to avoid then duplicating information the project team already had during the literature review and data collection. Staff from a few projects we interviewed explained that the PEAs that small teams of consultants carried out as deliverables for project inception provided insufficient detail. The staff expected the PEAs to illuminate the *why* behind relationships and dynamics and, in turn, to help develop a stakeholder strategy with staff input and a deeper understanding of whom to engage, why, and how. Project staff felt less detailed PEAs told them little that was new, and they could not relate and apply the analysis to their specific activities. This perspective is consistent with a current refrain in PEA discussions, which is that a PEA traditionally has not yielded a PEA strategy, but staff and senior management as implementors need PEA strategies.

Internal Project Dynamics and Staff

Internal project factors that contribute positively to thinking politically include staff involvement and the use of simple terminology, local language, and local knowledge. Staff value APEA language that is adapted to local practices and understanding. As a member of one project's senior management team said, "The PEA language (*jargon and terminology*) needs to be more user-friendly and contextualized, as staff do not find the acronym TWP useful." For example, various staff and stakeholders in a project's operating context or a sector beyond governance may find the phrase *thinking and working politically* easier to interpret and use than the initialism *TWP*, which is not very meaningful to those who are not already fairly familiar with the term *thinking and working politically*. It is more difficult to deduce what *TWP* signifies than to determine the meaning of *thinking and working politically*: knowing the context and how it operates; who holds power and can influence change; where the challenges are and why; and where there are opportunities to prompt the government to become more accountable, transparent, and responsive to fulfilling and or advancing reforms and policy implementation.

The more APEA is explicitly integrated into internal program systems and processes, such as existing MEL frameworks, the more staff and program leadership regularly have the

necessary contextual information and evidence to adapt and make decisions that support program objectives. For example, the FCDO-funded PONTENCIAR project in Mozambique has a MREAL strategy that combines PEA with action ethnography, which involves staff engaging stakeholders and connecting macro-, meso- and micro-level insights by convening meetings with various stakeholders who may have never before discussed collaborating on a common agenda. POTENCIAR has learned that MREAL systems must document formal and informal meetings more systematically to facilitate the most beneficial, ongoing PEA. This documentation would capture staff discussions and their implications for different staff members and partners. Other project staff interviewed have also experienced the importance of capturing evidence and learning for program adaptation and refining MEL processes (e.g., quarterly reports, learning reviews, evaluations, and assessments of theories of change) to best support decision-making.

Senior leadership team members, especially team leaders or chiefs of party, with APEA experience from other projects have valuable expertise and relevant lessons to share. Many of the people we interviewed said that a leadership team that understands the value of TWP and APEA is a key internal factor that contributes to thinking politically. These leaders are conscious of the balance needed to read the project context and appreciate the risks local staff take at times in their personal relationships with stakeholders. For example, most chiefs of party or team leaders interviewed explained that their projects aimed to influence decision-makers, systems, and behavior that might be resistant to reform as a result of everyday dynamics within the project context. This insight aligns with findings in the USAID-Chemonics report, which includes the example of a project team that had a chief of party who was a strong proponent of TWP. The chief of party led the project team in integrating TWP-related questions into the regular pause-and-reflect meetings, which equipped the team to adapt effectively to ongoing shifts in the context. The team also used TWP-related questions in regular stakeholder meetings to track relevant shifts.

External Dynamics of Partners and Relationships

External factors that contribute to thinking politically largely revolve around relationships, people, and institutions. The more a project knows about the specific people within and across the institutions that the project wants to influence, the better. Thinking politically requires staff to know what changes they seek to bring about and the parties those changes will positively and negatively affect. In more focused APEAs (see text box on the Syria Education Programme, or “Manahel”), it was important for the stakeholder analysis to identify which institutions thought they would be negatively affected by the change the project aimed to achieve. It was also important for the project to determine how to illustrate the positive part these institutions could play in the change and how, in turn, that would benefit them directly or indirectly (because everyone gains in the long term when interests align). Carefully considering the external dynamics, people, and institutions in a project's operating context is critical. Thinking about strategies to influence and build relationships with institutions and agencies is important, but findings suggest that it is essential to focus on the people who make up the institutions. Specifically, it is vital to understand the power and influence that external stakeholders have or do not have on the system and culture within the institutions.

Lessons for Thinking Politically

The findings above speak to two key lessons related to thinking politically.

- First, the purpose of carrying out a PEA or an APEA is to assist staff in understanding the deeper, non-technical reasons why things are happening as they are in the sectors, spaces, or institutions where the staff are working. These processes are particularly useful for examining questions of power, influence, and incentives and identifying potential ways to help achieve project objectives that are in the common interest. When this fundamental purpose of thinking politically remains in focus, project teams are empowered to transform thinking in multiple ways, succeed in generating change, and clearly articulate how to make change happen.
- Second, the findings corroborate learning from the USAID-Chemonics report on the value of using more inclusive PEA processes to involve staff at various levels in the design, research, analysis, and formulation of implications. Such inclusion fosters a deeper understanding of contextual dynamics, and most project leaders want to work inclusively. However, projects must invest time and other resources in PEA processes to make them effective. The USAID-Chemonics report also suggests that time constraints on staff often pose significant challenges to aspects of PEA processes.

Therefore, projects must strike a balance between involving staff in these processes (including learning more about the operational environment and the most effective action they can take) and mitigating relevant risks (failing to produce deliverables on time or making staff vulnerable). Seeking this balance encourages staff to think more politically and develop plans that work in alignment with the context while facilitating change.

We found additional empirical evidence that thinking politically requires the following:

- Willingness and ability of the project leadership and management teams and donor managers to dedicate the time and other resources needed to provide hands-on practical support. This support may take various forms, such as mentoring, training, or facilitation. It is critical to select more than just a few technical advisors or people in senior roles to learn about thinking politically and the deeper local dynamics. Other staff members also need these opportunities so that project teams can cohesively work in a politically smart way.
- Attention to detail matters when designing APEAs, and they should focus on specific priority questions or issues that a project must better understand to achieve its objectives. Standard PEA guidance generally recommends designing a problem-based PEA around a specific issue rather than a whole sector or institution, although sector- or institution-level APEAs may be useful in some cases. Regardless, much care is needed to hone the research questions that will help illuminate a specific issue. These questions should focus on aspects of the issue that the project team, close partners, informants, and recent literature on the topic cannot already answer. The examination of such questions will equip staff and partners with knowledge that can better inform their plans, actions, and decision-making.

3. Working Politically: Manifestations and Factors

Thinking politically sets the foundation to implement strategies that are politically and contextually intelligent — designed to navigate the local context and influence actor behavior. These strategies help increase the effectiveness and sustainability of actions that consider and account for power dynamics among local actors and the incentives they need to advance common goals. The project staff we interviewed for this study shared no magic tools for working politically; in reality, working politically manifests in many ways that depend on the project context and goals. In this respect, we found that working politically is notably different from the variety of recognized tools available to support staff in thinking politically. This study's findings provide empirical evidence that again corroborates past assertions about and discussions of key factors that support working politically. The study also identifies some additional important elements of working politically.

Ways of Working Politically

Most projects that this study considered engaged in working politically by using several different strategies, activities, and tactics that depended on the moment and issue needing attention. Fewer projects updated internal tools, such as theories of change based on PEA and ongoing learning, but all projects adjusted activities to shift incentives as needed or take advantage of temporary opportunities. In addition, most projects leveraged and cultivated relationships with stakeholders in new ways that were informal and formal. For example, the projects fostered these relationships through regular informal dialogue as well as by holding formal meetings or convening different groups of stakeholders around common issues and agenda setting. The projects also supported government stakeholders in thinking through how to be more inclusive of citizen organizations and community groups often excluded from planning and decision-making about matters affecting them. While cultivating these relationships, the projects ensured that their vested interests and implementing strategies aligned with system actors' interests and inputs much as possible. All projects intertwined more informal daily PEA through formal and informal activities integrated into routine staff practice. We elaborate on these findings below.

Working politically most often manifests in the form of several strategies, activities, and tactics used simultaneously or in combination with technical solutions. It also includes NOT doing certain things. For instance, one project worked politically through combined methods, starting with offering to help government entities improve technical skills to advance an important national reform that was also highly political. While doing so, the project team leveraged and nurtured relationships with individuals the team identified as the key decision-makers in relation to this reform, as well as others open to taking on reform issues. One member of the project's senior management team noted, "Staff work relationships and those they know informally and personally in government who hold positions of power so they can move things when facing delays." Another method the team used was to apply its political knowledge to make decisions in favor of the project's value for

money and impact. Notably, the team decides to drop what is not working (e.g., in one case, approaches failed to advance when senior government staff blocked important processes and withheld necessary documentation due to other interests) and then discusses with the donor how to cut losses and instead shift to focus resources where progress is happening.

Working politically often means leveraging and nurturing relationships in informal and formal ways to engage and amplify the work of change agents while exerting influence on others. This form of working politically happens after the project identifies and understands the key actors and stakeholders in the system targeted, including their power dynamics, interests, and intersections. For example, in Peru, the Transparent Public Investment (TPI) project team works with local associations in service delivery, engaging with stakeholders that bring about integrity networks to influence and uphold service provider delivery and standards. TPI regularly holds a reflective exercise with partners and integrity networks on progress and current challenges. Staff facilitate sessions with partners during which they ask each other questions like, "Why does [s/he] not want to sit at the table? How can we work around this issue?" For TPI, holding these partner reflections (monitoring exercises) and engaging with each other on these issues is working politically.

Relevance Through Multiple Trust-Based Relationships

In one project studied, leadership emphasized how working politically means maintaining relationships with those identified as key partners and continually exchanging real-time information to ensure project activities remain relevant and effect change. "Projects on the ground require insights and intelligence gathering, and they [government] get assistance from us as to what will be relevant to consider," said a member of the senior management team. "Direction that comes from senior government is not always the best information nor accurate, and often middle technical experts in government may have a different view. Combining different levels of information from stakeholders, we then match it up. The head of agency gets advice from the technical teams; we go through the people that the leaders trust. This is one strategy. It works to focus and engage people who leaders trust."

This team also continually analyzes the project context in team meetings and adapts as needed. As a member of the senior management team explains, "We chose champions and assess and reassess the context and players. We adjust weekly, daily even, depending on the challenges. We adjust strategies not the outcomes." Discussions held in weekly meetings and around work planning are crucial, as the political context can change rapidly. One important insight from staff was to never underestimate how political change can affect the project; therefore, regularly monitoring of the stability of the political environment is critical. This form of risk assessment and mitigation is working politically. Even small pieces of information that come through stakeholder meetings can be significant, so it is important to meet regularly to share and discuss information and then adjust the engagement of institutions accordingly. For example, at various meetings, project staff specializing in governance continued to share that government was going to reduce its budget in a key local sector. This information was extremely important to share with the project's technical advisor for that sector. The team then contacted various connections in the local government in the sector to determine how to address the news.

Working politically through relationships frequently means engaging vested interests and implementing strategies aligned with system actors' interests and inputs much as possible. Working politically in this way is a practical strategy for "going with the grain" once the

project has identified which "grains" are or can be oriented toward shared goals and where the risks and resistance are. For example, in one project's country context, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) was pressuring high levels of government to enact important reforms. But the government was stalling. Through conversations with the IMF, the project began to understand the pockets of resistance and came up with strategies and technical tools to better prevent corruption and increase transparency. These efforts improved the government's systems without confrontation. The government and project staff worked through several inputs, needs, and options for system reform. This coordination helped the project position itself as a trusted partner for the system actors interested in working together to achieve results and emerging priorities. The project also navigated the system to invest less in the actors who were more invested in older government priorities that could sabotage system change and transparency.

Working politically is often intertwined with ongoing PEA through formal and informal activity integrated into routine staff practice promoted by senior leadership dedicated to TWP. For POTENCIAR in Mozambique, this form of working politically involves what the staff call "daily PEAs." The daily PEAs, held via technical WhatsApp groups, look at media and help the groups understand relevant real-time shifts. In the Philippines, DELIVER holds quarterly progress and strategy meetings — as do many Chemonics-implemented projects — to allow for reflections on notable shifts in stakeholders, context, and institutions. In Timor-Leste, Tourism for All's staff explored TWP-related questions in more informal check-ins with the leadership team. These check-ins then helped more formal meetings focus on how to address changes in the operating environment. The USAID-Chemonics research findings also suggest that TWP champions on project leadership teams are often critical in creating an operating environment that integrates TWP.

Factors for Working Politically

This study's findings revealed multiple contributing factors that support working politically, which often overlap:

1. Senior leadership that understands the value of TWP and enables it through a combination of formal processes, less formal practice, and culture within the project teams
2. Staff engagement and facilitative skills (not just technical skills) to build relationships with partners and those resistant to change
3. Donor (FCDO or USAID) manager support to TWP and regular PEAs depending on the context to inform project decision-making and effectiveness
4. Staff capabilities, systems, motivation, and contractual flexibility to manage challenges and contextual risks as they arise and then adapt as needed
5. Staff capabilities, resources, systems, and motivation to use evidence and information as they arise and to adapt and inform programming accordingly
6. Staff leveraging or developing a wide range of networks and stakeholder connections

7. Staff capacity to integrate learning and analysis to adapt specific project work and technical activities as relevant contextual, institutional, or other changes occur

Underpinning all these factors is the ability to translate the deep contextual understanding gained from PEA and other tools (i.e., thinking politically) into action (working politically). Operationalizing contextual insights is routinely challenging. Teams find that the strategies or actions that will be "politically savvy" given the context and promote incentives and other ways of achieving the desired results are not always obvious. Most project staff feel unsure of their capacity to use their knowledge and new insights to navigate local systems in ways that truly transform power, attitudes, and behaviors. Project staff confirm that working politically is the harder part of the process.

Senior project leaders who strongly support working politically generally also appreciate that project staff may have personal relationships and extensive networks with the people the project aims to influence. Project leaders we interviewed explained that they wanted to encourage staff to participate in APEA processes and TWP because knowledge derived from relationships has proven useful and matters. However, these leaders recognize a common challenge: Staff do not always take a step back and look at the power dynamics of their informal relationships. They want to maintain good relationships with the officials they know beyond the project rather than risk changing those relationships by leveraging them to benefit the project.

Still, personal connections may help open doors that are usually closed, move certain activities along, or enable informal conversations about needed information to take place in ways that formal meetings cannot. According to a senior technical advisor, it is not unusual to have "important people on your phone who you know and they want to help, so we call them, give them updates. And when we need to understand why there is a hold up on certain information, want a certain official to attend an event, or [need to know] why a senior official will not respond, our contacts help us with setting up a meeting or finding out what the holdup may be." Many project staff we interviewed shared this view. Understanding the relationship dynamics was part of the working politically experience across all projects we interviewed.

Overall, project teams highlighted three key factors that constrain working politically and must be addressed to make it easier to translate thinking politically into working politically:

- Limited capacity and confidence to work politically with complicated dynamics, relationships, risks, and resistance
- Lack of project culture (sometimes including the donor) that embraces critical questions about politics, power, and change
- Limited capacity to work with PEA-sensitive information to support partners' awareness and address the issues of concern in their wider political context to direct reform

All the projects we studied have—in one way or another—engaged partners, built relationships to influence change, and done TWP to a degree. However, only a few projects

were deeply engaged with partners in making bottom-up, partner-owned change happen. This engagement requires investing in a process beyond technical project implementation. The process becomes a discovery, exposing systemic and behavioral issues to learn how to improve, strengthen, and transform the issue through thinking, planning, and working together — alongside incremental actions — with consistent cycles of dialogue, reflection, analysis, and adaptation.

Some of the ways that projects are addressing these constraints are:

1. Ensuring there is local stakeholder and institutional buy-in and commitment to reform
2. Encouraging common agenda-setting and collaboration with partnerships, agencies, and institutions
3. Working with a broad range of partners and stakeholders to enhance change efforts by investing in people who both want to see reform and have the potential power to help bring it about.
4. Being adaptable and flexible, where possible, in the changing environment in which the project and its partners operate
5. Including partner, stakeholder, and government ideas in the design of the reforms being prioritized and the related ongoing decision-making
6. Ensuring risks and challenges are understood, managed, and mitigated across partners and stakeholders to do no harm
7. Ensuring MEL regularly informs the team's work plans and activities for the sake of adaptation and innovation

Lessons for Working Politically

The findings suggest two important lessons about how to promote working politically to increase the effectiveness and sustainability of development and reform initiatives.

- First, when project staff work more politically and use PEA in various ways — along with tools that help staff unpack issues and consider ideas that could help deliver incremental changes — TWP becomes more inherent to how staff think through challenges. Staff then bring this thinking into their workstream strategy, action plans, and activities. Integrating TWP into the project culture inevitably supports the project in navigating challenges over the course of implementation, as some examples above demonstrate.
- The second lesson is that relationships matter. The technical aspects of projects may be a challenge to implement, but stakeholder relationships may prove just as challenging for various contextual reasons (e.g., if the recipient partner, such as a ministry, is resistant to the reforms the project aims to advance). Navigating the networks of people relevant to the change process is part of the work and often gets in the way of implementing technical aspects to reform systems. All project staff understand that the institutions the

project partners with and the people in them will last beyond the life of the project and are, therefore, key to the interventions' sustainability.

Therefore, working politically in ways that further key development outcomes requires the following:

- Support, opportunities, and incentives fostered by senior project leadership and donor managers to encourage staff to work politically. This support includes clearly communicated expectations and guidelines around TWP, the approval of resources needed to work politically (e.g., time), access to key actors for formal and informal discussions, and work plan adaptations.
- Strengthened staff capability to apply contextual insights to ways of working politically. Staff need the ability (with support, as needed) to unpack real-time information and adapt or develop new strategies in a facilitative way with local actors.
- Capacity and incentives to engage in and navigate relationships with people and institutions, reading the context with political savvy. This capacity may necessitate getting to know important people, what their incentives are, and how to reach them. It may also necessitate working with colleagues or other stakeholders who know them, building on networks to influence and reform in a non-adversarial way.

4. Value and Impact of Thinking and Working Politically

The projects we interviewed for this study attest to the value and impact of TWP. The project staff have adapted to their local context and started new ways of working or pivoted to activities requiring political thinking and strategy. On most projects, there was a relationship between how staff approached APEA and engaged in TWP more broadly, as the practice of analysis and working politically are interconnected. Specifically, the value and impact of TWP that we observed included the following benefits.

Work planning became more aligned with the local political economy — given the emphasis on stakeholders — and increased support for locally led development. Activities corresponded to strategies informed by how things were working at the time in the local system, including different groups' interests and how those people and interests could positively or negatively influence project outcomes.

Opportunities to promote change became apparent along with the power, interests, and dynamics of local actors and the related potential of different partnerships. For example, the stakeholder analysis of many projects used in the APEA process offered staff a greater understanding of the landscape of actors relevant to a given development/reform agenda. This understanding included insight into who is influential, holds power, and is interested (or not) in reform. The focus on stakeholders and the local political economy enabled staff to understand why things were the way they were, who was involved, and how. As a result, staff included new or different actors in project plans and new or adapted activities and strategies for stakeholder engagement. Staff felt encouraged to ask questions that prompted them to think more strategically about working with state institutions and actors: *Who are the local actors already responsible for or contributing to reform in different ways? Why are they involved, and what is in it for them? Who else do we need to think of? How can we conduct this activity with local actors and in support of their efforts?*

Key project staff started to recognize that they were not just implementing a donor-funded project in their country but that they could influence and support local development actors in shifting behaviors and systems to achieve reform objectives. Through the PEA exercise, staff began to understand deeper nuances of the context around their project and sector. This understanding helped staff to think strategically about the political landscape and how to influence change. This reflection, in turn, clarified that local relationships and networks were more valuable than they initially might have seemed because relationships and people in the system have long-term potential to influence the system beyond the project's life.

For example, PONTENCIAR in Mozambique identified with local stakeholders the challenges to accessing healthcare services, how to build a strategy to address these challenges, and how PONTENCIAR could support stakeholders in improving access to healthcare services. PONTENCIAR continues to prioritize insights from the local community about how to drive real change. In Syria, the PEA process enabled Manahel to strengthen its TWP. As one staff

member remarked, "APEA helped us to see all the people involved, not even education people but people who can help with policy. We look at how we can influence the system, sustain impact of our outcomes with a broader perspective of local actors now and our relationship with them."

The projects identified state institutions that were not originally identified as primary partners but demonstrated the capacity, opportunity, and motivation to promote reform objectives.

Projects put working politically into practice as they developed strategies for building links and relationships with other stakeholders, agencies, and



Tourism for All engaging youth in Timor-Leste

ministries. In Timor-Leste, Tourism for All's APEA made it clear that the Ministry of Tourism's political capacity was insufficient to deliver the project's vision for tourism. The APEA helped staff they could engage more than one ministry and that they needed to build relationships with other ministries. As a team member expressed, "If you keep knocking on the door that isn't working, there is no impact and change. Instead, we worked with other partners, such as Public Private Partnerships in the Ministry of Finance and became quite close to them. The idea is to interact and leverage relationships to get back to the presumed counterpart. Tourism is everyone's business." This approach enabled Tourism for All's activities to have an impact in and beyond the tourism sector (see photo), enhancing the Ministry of Tourism's reach and partnership with other ministries.

In some cases, a greater understanding of power, equality, and exclusion helped shape how project staff worked politically for policy advocacy and engagement, building common agendas, formal networks, and strategies. For example, in Syria, the Manahel team designed activities to gain insight into the gender policy in place, gender numbers in education, female staff, and potential champions for gender policy in education. One project team member noted, "We may not have thought about this before. The questions in the APEA also helped us as a first experience to understand the process, sustain the approach, and not just focus on the outcome delivery of education — to maintain achievements around equality and gender, not just the education aspect but understanding how to sustain the changes needed for all the people."

In other cases, engaging in thinking politically with local stakeholders became an act of working politically through relationships beneficial to achieving shared objectives. In Peru, TPI's APEA became a method of working politically. The dialogue and relationships TPI built with the stakeholders consulted during the APEA prompted many of these actors to join the critical new integrity networks TPI supported. These networks promote multi-stakeholder dialogue and civil society oversight to ensure that public works meet integrity standards and that these investments will benefit citizens equally. The APEA methodology looked to understand the goals of citizens, specific private sector stakeholders, and key public institutions. These three stakeholder groups, joined during the APEA process, wanted to share an agenda and identify where they could pursue opportunities together. In this way, the research methodology enabled them to forge meaningful relationships with each other and a common agenda. "We could not escape talking about corruption in the regions with the private sector and how to discuss this with them. We build many relationships with stakeholders," said a staff member. "We had to inquire about their work and build their confidence for a common agenda. And link the connections that each was doing. The APEA was very useful for this as we took an in-depth facilitative approach, and this helped to identify who we should invite to the INs [integrity networks], who to prioritize, and which regions."

5. Discussion: TWP in Support of Locally Driven, Sustained Change

Across the research findings, which prior studies and experience corroborate, a certain flow of working politically stands out as vital to supporting locally driven reform. As a team of people on an international development project — foreigners and nationals working together to support and often help spur change within a local system — project staff must:

- Deeply understand the political economy of that system — including why individuals and institutions are currently acting as they are, why certain problems have persisted, or why and how certain solutions or local innovations have started to take hold
- Identify existing actors, assets, momentum, relationships, opportunities, and possible incentives for individuals and institutions to align interests in favor of shared development objectives
- Build on this work by supporting specific actors and initiatives where the evidence base for technical effectiveness aligns with the [change space](#) of political authority, stakeholder acceptance, and local ability (including time, financial, material, and human resources as well as current skills)
- Continue to study the evolving context, reactions to interventions, and emerging results, including unintended consequences

Project staff then broaden their understanding (thinking politically) through ongoing monitoring and reflection ([pause and reflect](#)) and adapt their strategies and actions (working politically) based on this understanding. They further aim to iterate and improve their efforts through the new evidence generated and strategic pathways and interest-driven arguments identified to influence reform, the relationships built, and their own evolving delivery and relational skills.

On the other side, local actors continue to pursue the interests they have already identified for themselves, maintaining their course of action. These actors generally are not driven by a singular interest either for or against reform — in contrast to frequent mischaracterizations in "champion and detractor" stakeholder analyses. Instead, they possess "goal complexity" (Scott & Davis, 2007): institutions (and individuals) simultaneously pursuing multiple goals that are formal/official, informal/personal, and often in conflict, or at least in tension. As a result, many actors have interests that currently or potentially go both for and against the changes sought by local reformers and project staff.

Project staff possessing deep relationships with or knowledge of these local actors — who themselves are part of this system or who have sought to profoundly understand it — recognize this goal complexity. As a result, they engage with these actors to increase alignment around *shared* interests. In working politically, the project's strategic decisions, actions, and ongoing learning, therefore, pursue this commonality — even as they often

struggle to identify ways of increasing incentives or the opportunities and motivations individuals need to shift behaviors further toward that commonality.

As the TWP process progresses, staff and local partners alike increase their appreciation of the bigger picture of their interconnected mutual aims. And they do so alongside other, often competing interests and priorities, constituting a complex system of multiple stakeholders themselves with interests both for and against multiple goals.

Through the dialogue and information-sharing that comes from relationships, project staff deepen and enrich their understanding of the power dynamics surrounding these processes. They broaden their perspective by seeing the goal complexity and different priorities within the local system through the eyes of multiple local actors working toward multiple goals. In time, this collective pursuit brings project staff and local reformers to consider the importance of the macro national context of power encompassing competing priorities — including and especially across different public sectors — and multiple important power blocks operating within the country.

An emerging reckoning with the political economy of international development itself includes calls for [decolonizing](#) foreign assistance and shifts "[from programs to progress](#)" in favor of localization — as well as calls simply to [#shiftthepower](#). In this context, international assistance efforts to think and work politically to support truly locally led development include extending the process outlined above to support the local reformers already focused on and driving reform in their own local systems by boosting their efforts to think and work politically.

The table on the next page suggests a mapping of what the evolution of international project-driven TWP and the growing strength of locally driven TWP for community-defined and sustained reform may look like based on the experiences of projects analyzed in this study. Dark green portrays higher levels of ownership and responsibility; the lighter shades correspond to increasingly lower levels. The first dark green shading illustrates how the framework of international development projects first views questions of ownership and influence — as partnerships with local government and other actors in which the project often sees itself holding the responsibility to influence the reform agenda, convene, and facilitate a change process. In this case, the lighter green indicates less expectation for local actors to themselves be thinking and working politically.

The aim is for projects to increasingly recognize a) the TWP that local actors and especially change agents themselves are *already* undertaking, b) the goal complexity in the local system, and c) the existing and potential local assets that can be further mobilized and boosted in support of locally defined and driven reform. Ultimately, this means amplified TWP by local actors and a diminishing role for international intervention, or in some cases international cooperation that is invited by local actors and built on shared interests, prior successes, mutuality, and finally, relationships as peers.

THE EVOLUTION OF INTERNATIONAL TWP IN SUPPORT OF LOCALLY DRIVEN REFORM

Phase of TWP	Project Staff Working Politically	Local Actors Working Politically	Combined Roles and Competencies
Thinking politically for "buy-in" to a goal seen as external to current local interests	Conduct APEA, at times in partnership with local actors	Agree to working with project in ways that align with some of their interests and their values	Thorough understanding of the issue or problem identified, the context, and roles and responsibilities of project staff and local actors
Initial action	Facilitate, provide resources and technical assistance to the change process	Engage with the project initiative and assert or take certain leadership roles in addressing the issue and take active part in the change process	Collaboration around a mutual goal
Further adaptive action	Continue to facilitate, provide resources and technical assistance to the change process but adapt the nature and volume of actions, strategies, and even objectives as needed in light of new evidence, priorities, changes in resources, or windows of opportunity	Active engagement in monitoring, pause and reflect, critical analysis, iterative planning, and specific interventions to influence and advance reforms	Additional understanding of the dynamics at play for and against reforms, within and outside their respective institutions or coalitions, with new learning to apply to their next strategic step; interconnectivity clear and other actors and sectors identifiable as valuable allies in the reform process at a more macro level
Small wins (possibly some big) in the process	Table text Measurement and public communication of initial positive changes toward project objectives; confidence, thinking, skills, and working politically broadens with improving contextual understanding, evidence of the effectiveness of interventions, strategies, refined arguments for greater influence, deepened relationships, and more effective delivery	Measurement and public communication of initial positive changes toward official objectives, showing improved delivery of official goals; thinking, skills, and action broaden with increased confidence from these early wins; relationships with other local actors deepened and at times strengthened, with increased relational skills and strength of arguments to influence	Strong interconnectivity through mutual wins and engagement in common processes; other stakeholders taking hold in the change process

THE EVOLUTION OF INTERNATIONAL TWP IN SUPPORT OF LOCALLY DRIVEN REFORM

Phase of TWP	Project Staff Working Politically	Local Actors Working Politically	Combined Roles and Competencies
Capacity strong to work politically and technically, relationships built and tested, project dependency/ dominance diminishing	Increased appreciation of the capabilities, opportunities, and motivations of individuals and institutions within the local system continuing to define and pursue their own priorities and coalitions; continue project adaptation based on this growing appreciation and greater understanding of capacities and power dynamics, aided by systematic cycles of regular formal and informal reflection and analysis	Continued work reform priorities, building bridges with others in the local system primarily and regional or global system as is beneficial in the pursuit of their own and others' objectives for public interest reform	Past collaboration and reform progress leads to reduced project intervention; local stakeholders consistently working in ways based on mutuality and common interests, with greater emphasis on the public interest for critical development priorities identified by local communities
Reflection and analysis to iterate, scale up, further adapt, and sustain changes	Continue to be of service to local actors where valued and welcomed as an ally; stay abreast of political interplays and contextual changes revisiting project stakeholder analyses, relationships, opportunities, behavioral analysis, and theory of change with a clear focus on an exit strategy	Pursuing reform goals in ways fully independent from the project, thinking and working politically with others on ongoing issues, drawing from the project relationship when desired as allies in the movement for change	Full appreciation of the assets and aligned interests within the local system to continue to drive reform with minimal outside intervention; project support phased out, with a shift toward future international engagement per local preferences and based on mutuality, cooperation, and peer relationships

6. Recommendations

As the previous chapters illustrate, this study revealed several factors that encourage and enable project staff to think politically in different ways; increase the usefulness of those exercises to inform project decisions and strategies more likely to succeed thanks to deep analysis; and work politically by selecting and designing strategies and activities based on these insights, nurturing relationships to help align actor interests, and continually adapting in light of new learning and changing context.

We make six recommendations for improving the application of TWP based on these factors, additional reflections, our recent experimentation with new methods, and ongoing exchanges within and beyond the TWP Community of Practice. The following six practices include ways of thinking and working politically that foster greater development impact and sustainability by considering the greater political economy of traditional international assistance and helping to shift from international programming to peer-based cooperation and the promotion of new systems of locally defined and led reform.

- 1. Invest in precise, actionable questions, including ones that examine assets, not just problems.** We know, based on the experience of our project staff and TWP specialists, that the ultimate value of an APEA or other context analysis exercise depends in large part on the very first step: the questions. How well the inquiry focuses on the project's top priority or targeted reform *and* what staff and others do not already deeply understand determines much of the exercise's later usefulness and applicability. It may seem intuitive not to spend time or money on something that is not important or that people already know, but projects have done so in the past and may continue to do so unless teams invest in background research, serious thought, and deep dialogue with local staff, and often local partners, to agree on the questions at the heart of the matter. Similarly, the usefulness and applicability of contextual analysis depend on including field research to complement system, stakeholder, or network mapping; the questions posed to the participants in the exercise should still be as targeted as possible.

Although TWP advisors have long recommended problem-driven questions to focus on the specific issues the project aims to address — like why a given reform has long seemed intractable — solely focusing on problems and their root causes risks overlooking important assets and cases of positive deviance in a local system. A project can more quickly arrive at actionable insights into how to amplify, multiply, or expand such cases in the future by asking where they may be in the system and why and how outlier reformers or high-performing units or locales do what they do.

- 2. Balance and purposefully mix robust, explanatory research with operational, flexible, rapid, and informal exercises.** Our project teams already mix more formal APEA studies and other exercises, like stakeholder mapping, with continuous everyday PEA-type activities, like regular informal meetings that include key power brokers and influencers. Each serves its own purpose. Robust research with triangulation and analysis getting at the "why" of things is still important at the project or reform inception — or at inflection

points facing major contextual shifts or opportunities for a deep review of an initiative's fundamental theory of change. Those who argue that such research takes too much time and money beg the question: What is the cost of *not* undertaking this analysis? The pursuit of major reform actions of long duration and large scale that fail to get at the root of the matter, leverage key local assets and support key change agents and coalitions, or acknowledge and address misaligned interests have always proven far more costly. This knowledge is at the heart of the repeated calls for longer project inception periods that allow for deeper inquiry and co-creation and for more flexible contractual mechanisms that allow for failing fast and adaptation.

However, projects should also encourage staff to employ targeted stakeholder and network analysis when needed to map the landscape of actors and their relationships, as the Manahel project in Syria did; daily PEAs, like POTENCIAR staff did in Mozambique via the WhatsApp groups that discussed the latest media and other analyses; and ongoing informal conversations with power brokers and other contacts, as nearly all the projects we interviewed did.

3. **Close the gap between APEA insights and action, and between institutions and individuals, with behavioral science.** Even when projects or reformers do conduct highly focused and robust APEA, myriad complex findings may prove overwhelming. Teams often struggle to see how to apply those findings to the alignment of interests and to the identification of potential ways forward — at both the institutional and individual levels. Identifying this challenge, Chemonics recently began experimenting with combining TWP and behavior change approaches, feeding the results of APEAs into a behavioral model that identifies where to target actors' capabilities, opportunities, or motivations at the individual and institutional levels. This [actor-based change framework](#) takes on system complexity but quiets the noise in highly practical ways, illuminating the possible ways to achieve behavior change and align interests across the system to bring about the desired reforms. Combined with change space analysis to identify which initiatives are likely to be politically and technically feasible at any one time, this APEA-informed behavioral framework may be a key link between thinking politically and working politically.
4. **Support the many ways of working politically, including explicit, purposeful investment in relationships and in real space and time for testing and iteration.** The findings consistently emphasize the importance of relationships. The cynical view misunderstands this approach as one that simply entails leveraging — or, really, exploiting — personal contacts for institutional gain in projects. Instead, the approach requires ethical or truly effective relationship building in the name of cooperation around shared objectives and in support of local reform leadership. Relationships between project staff and local actors — and between local actors themselves — must start with a deeper appreciation of mutual goal complexity and the assets everyone brings to the table. Project leaders and donors must encourage and support these relationships, which can then be nurtured in multiple evidence-based ways to build trust around sincere common interests — such as

by sharing decision-making processes, avoiding surprises, sharing successes, and working iteratively ([Proud, 2020](#)).

Working iteratively — with space to test and fail — is another key aspect of working politically that needs to be much more supported and incentivized in practice, not just in theory. We agree with the repeated calls for greater contractual flexibility and support to try solutions without severe penalties — that is, to see "failure" during purposeful testing as an opportunity for learning. Whether through problem-driven iterative adaptation or more design-inspired processes of prototyping, supporting project and local actors' experimentation with emerging solutions and enabling them to evolve and adapt in real time must be a key part of doing development differently.

- 5. Formally integrate TWP into MEL and CLA processes, with resources and incentives to adhere to these processes.** This study has shown the importance of institutionalizing TWP into project and reformer practice so that TWP is no longer optional while giving teams the resources to do this work, creating systematic routines and pathways for channeling insights into adaptive action. These MEL and CLA actions include, for example, regular combined assessments of political context, behavioral, conflict, climate, and gender and inclusion analysis; regular updates of stakeholder mapping, especially at inflection points during elections and other leadership changes; and annual reviews of project or reform theory of change in relation to these updated insights and with the contract's results framework.
- 6. Support local TWP for true locally led development.** As the previous chapter's discussion of study findings attests, there are ways that the international and national staff of international development projects can apply TWP purposely to support the TWP that local change agents in these contexts are already conducting and thereby target the most transformative outcomes possible. Additional opportunities may arise for projects to strengthen the capabilities, opportunities, and motivations of these change agents to use deep analysis to devise their own politically savvy approaches. As donors call for localization and seek to promote a shift from programs to progress by prioritizing local leadership and by diminishing the roles of traditional international development projects, cooperation around TWP in the name of locally defined, driven, and sustained reform will significantly advance these goals.

Annex: Matrix of Sampled Chemonics-Implemented Programming Using TWP

NAME OF PROJECT*	TWP APPROACHES**	SECTOR/ THEME	COUNTRY	FUNDER
Accelerating Peri-Urban Water and Sanitation Services in Kasai Oriental and Lomami Provinces (DRC WASH)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inception APEA with staff involved in design and data collection, with APEA research and interview questions channeled into other, technical-focused inception research to avoid interviewee burnout • Stakeholder analysis and influence analysis for water law • APEA combined with GESI • Stakeholder engagement and facilitation with local actors and authorities around problem-solving using problem-driven iterative adaptation methodology based on a local agenda and inputs 	Water and sanitation	The Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC)	USAID
Bangladesh Ecosystems/Protibes h Activity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inception APEA with inclusion of staff in data collection and analysis • Specific APEA and with targeted questions • APEA framework integrated into day-to-day implementation to promote adaptive programming and flexibility in activity design 	Environment and natural resource management	Bangladesh	USAID
Delivering Effective Government for Competitiveness and Inclusive Growth (DELIVER)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inception APEA with inclusion of staff in design, research, analysis, and data collection; annual PEAs thereafter • PEA to support staff work plans and activities • Integrated MEL, regular meetings, and ad hoc TWP discussions to inform project adaptation and strategy • Work plan alignment with PEAs and TWP • Strong relationships and connections with political authorities • Strong culture of TWP and adapting across staff 	Economic growth and governance	The Philippines	USAID
Fiscal Reform for a Strong Tunisia (FIRST)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inception APEA with focused research questions • Second APEA inclusive of staff in design, analysis, and feedback and with a focus on stakeholder analysis • Power analysis and stakeholder analysis • Technical support to Ministry of Finance, including showcasing its work • Building staff capacity for TWP and using relevant networks and relationships 	Public financial management, fiscal reform	Tunisia	USAID

NAME OF PROJECT*	TWP APPROACHES**	SECTOR/ THEME	COUNTRY	FUNDER
Iraq Social Cohesion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inception APEA using mixed methods with several research questions — with Chemonics’ Center for Politically Informed supporting research design and a local supporting data collection and analysis • Hired specialists to integrate conflict-sensitivity and GESI considerations into research design and implementation • Diagnostic used for policy recommendations and to design the follow-on Iraq project for FCDO • (Mandate was for APEA only at this stage of research report) 	Conflict Security Stability Fund (CSSF)	Iraq	FCDO
Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Revenue Mobilization (KPRM)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inception APEA with limited involvement of staff in data collection and analysis; staff support in the review of PEA design and draft report analysis • Strong relationships and connections with political authority • Engagement and technical exercises with partners on public financial management system • Stakeholder analysis and influence analysis for impact • Regular formal and informal meetings with project staff on progress and issues in context, with change of federal to provincial incentives 	Public financial management, tax revenue	Pakistan	USAID
POTENCIAR: Transparency and Accountability for Inclusive Development Pillar 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inception APEA inclusive of staff in design, research, analysis, and data collection with aspects specific to the health PEA and macro-PEA • Regular analysis and assessments of power, conflict, gender, the theory of change, and specific studies • Local partner involvement in and ownership of development of issues and working groups • MREAL framework support to TWP • Strong culture and skills in TWP and adapting across staff 	Accountability and service delivery	Mozambique	FCDO
Syria Education Programme (SEP-1 or Manahel)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inception APEA with staff involved in design, research, data collection, and targeted stakeholder-focused analysis around priority questions • Due to limited team bandwidth and resources, this inception APEA was not completed as a full study; instead, a targeted group of interviews informed the stakeholder mapping exercise • Engagement and convening with education stakeholders • Specific Child Safe-Guarding Policy advocacy and engagement with Ministry of Education • Review of theory of change and adapting activities accordingly 	Education	Syria	FCDO

NAME OF PROJECT*	TWP APPROACHES**	SECTOR/ THEME	COUNTRY	FUNDER
Tourism for All	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inception APEA inclusive of staff in design, research, data collection, and analysis • Strong relationships and connections with political authorities • Regular formal and informal meetings with project staff on progress, issues in context, and stakeholders • Capacity assessment of Ministry of Tourism • Stakeholder analysis and influence analysis • Strong culture of TWP and adapting across staff 	Tourism	Timor-Leste	USAID
Transparent Public Investment (TPI)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inception APEA inclusive of staff in design, research, data collection, and analysis • Stakeholder engagement, local partner inputs, and use of risk assessments and integrity standard tools • Strong culture of TWP, learning, reflecting, and adapting across staff • Monthly meetings and quarterly meetings to analyze progress and issues • Integrated MEL, regular reflection meetings, and ad hoc TWP discussions to inform project adaptation and strategy 	Public sector investment and accountability	Peru	USAID

*The projects listed here are a sample of those included in the overall study.

**The approaches listed for each project are an approximation and snapshot of the methods used and the activities conducted at the time this report was produced; all of the ongoing projects listed continue to apply TWP in different ways.

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