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SAMPLE THEORIES OF CHANGE (annotated version)

The two sample theories of change below accompany the [Theory of Change Workbook](#), and provide strong examples of theory of change products (1. theory of change narrative and 2. visual / logic model). Each theory of change provides a clear articulation of the four elements of strong theories of change: entry points, outcomes, interventions, and assumptions. These elements are identified in the comment boxes below.

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SAMPLE I: COASTAL HABITAT CONSERVATION

The theory of change example below is adapted from a USAID implementing partner, the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN). This example includes 3 parts:

1. Description of the case study's context
2. Theory of Change narrative
3. Examples of how to visualize the Theory of Change narrative into a logic model

PART I: CONTEXTUAL ANALYSIS

Note: A strong theory of change comes out of a robust understanding of the local context (the current state).

The Polaris Delta and its islands are home to 55% of the State of Polarisia's mangroves and 85% of its seagrass beds, making it one of the most ecologically important marine areas in the region. However, coastal habitats in the Polaris Delta have been under increasing threat for the last two decades, particularly with expanded economic development along the coast, intensive near-shore fishing, and the continued impact of climate change. To address these issues, USAID's new strategy makes "coastal habitat conservation improved" an objective of U.S. support with "increased coastal biodiversity" a key outcome.

There are complex factors contributing to poor conservation and biodiversity outcomes at present:

- Investment in the islands has prioritized tourism over habitat conservation and fisheries management. Over the last 10-15 years, some seagrass beds have declined by up to 50% due to the exponential growth in tourism and the largely unregulated development of beach resorts.
- Recent changes to MPA zones reflect the power of Polarisia's largest local real estate companies and the general mindset of an industry that views the MPA largely as a tourism development area, with little consideration for the long-term conservation of natural capital.
- Intensive near-shore fishing has depleted fish stocks leading to the phenomenon of "fishing down the food web," a process by which fisheries deplete the larger fish leading to an eventual focus (out of necessity) on catching smaller fish, which is devastating ecologically and unsustainable long-term.
- Fishing still occurs within marine protected zones, reflecting the relatively low emphasis placed on conservation and the limited power of the Marine Protected Area (MPA) authority to enforce the law.
- Most of the fishers in and around the MPA are from outside the island and feel little sense of responsibility toward sustainability.

While several interventions have been undertaken over the past two decades to address the myriad threats to biodiversity in the Delta and its islands, these have proven insufficient in suitably protecting key marine and coastal habitats and the species that depend on them. USAID and other donors have funded various activities, but the combination of actors and interests highlighted above have limited meaningful progress in strengthening marine protected area management.

PART 2: THEORY OF CHANGE NARRATIVE

Against this backdrop, the Theory of Change (ToC) is grounded on the recognition that new approaches are required to address root structural problems, namely the relationships, mindsets, and behaviors of the key influential actors in the system, as necessary precursors to biodiversity conservation.

Further analysis during start-up found that the tourism industry on the islands and along the coast could be a key driver for change. The major tourism brands have long-term economic interests that actually align with biodiversity conservation objectives (healthy, biodiverse coasts attract tourists and sustain their large-scale investments long-term). Several international brands investing in the area (Accor, InterContinental, Sheraton,

etc.) have strong Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and sustainability policies globally and have begun demonstrating that commitment locally. The large Polarisian conglomerates want to be seen as aligned with international standards, and the Activity can leverage this to partner with the international and local private sector. Given the power of the tourism sector in the area, if they use their weight to protect the MPA, this could be a gamechanger, leading to greater enforcement of local fishing and coastal conservation regulations by local government units.

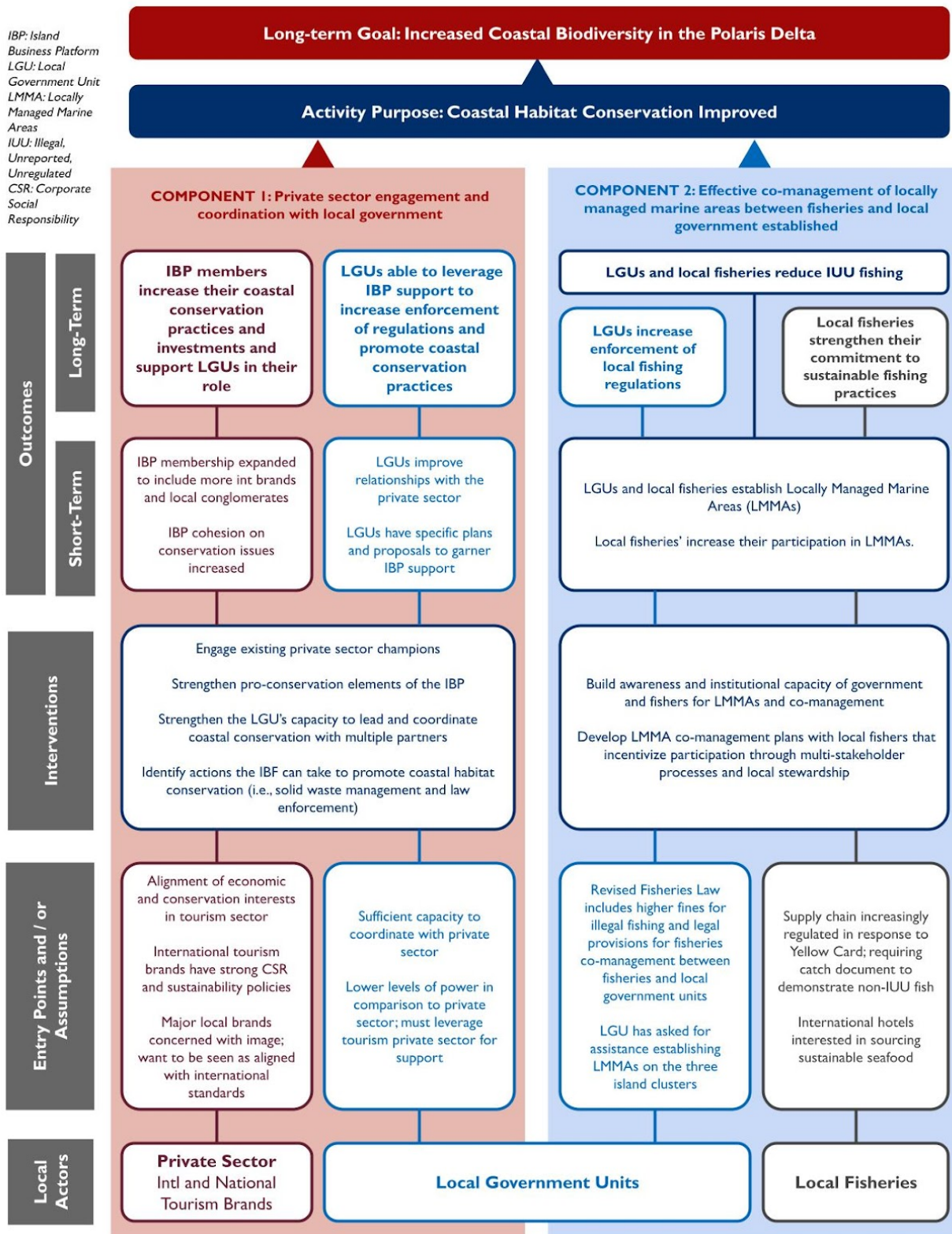
To leverage this entry point, the Activity will work with existing champions in the private sector, starting with committed international chains first that have agreed to participate to further strengthen the pro-conservation elements within the Island Business Platform (IBP). The Activity anticipates that major national brands will be motivated by pride and “fear of missing out” to participate with the international brands in the platform to promote business investment in coastal resources management. The Activity will simultaneously work with the local government unit (LGU) to connect to the IBP and to identify actions the IBP can take to promote coastal habitat conservation (i.e., solid waste management and law enforcement). We assume a base level of capacity within the LGU to coordinate among the various business interests based on our previous programming involvement and will measure the change in membership and relationships within the IBP and the change in relationships between the IBP and the LGU using social network analysis or other qualitative methods. This is an unorthodox approach to strengthening MPA management, but all the evidence to date shows that a classic approach based on capacity building and training of the MPA management board will not work since it has almost no power vis-a-vis the tourism sector.

In addition, in 2019, Polarisia’s inability to reign in illegal fishing outside its territorial waters resulted in the EU issuing it a Yellow Card. Since then, seafood exports to the EU have declined by 10% per year, equivalent to a loss of hundreds of millions of dollars a year. In response to the Yellow Card, Polarisia revised its Fisheries Law, which includes much higher fines for illegal fishing. The revised law also includes legal provisions for fisheries co-management between fisheries and local government units. The government recently released detailed implementation guidance for this form of co-management, known as Locally Managed Marine Areas (LMMAs). Importantly, the local government unit has asked for assistance establishing LMMAs on the three island clusters, creating an ideal opportunity to reduce IUU fishing in the short-term and to establish an initial basis for more formalized protection going forward in this area. International hotel chains are also interested in sourcing sustainable seafood and can be leveraged to support this effort.

The Activity will therefore work with local fishing communities and the LGU to take advantage of these interrelated entry points, developing a network of co-managed LMMAs that support long-term sustainable use and demonstrably reduce and control illegal fishing. The Activity assumes that continued support from the highest levels (the Prime Minister’s office) will continue to encourage local government support for this effort. As enforcement improves and increases from the local government side, local fisheries will be motivated to participate in co-management schemes to have a voice at the table. In this way, the Activity will support a successful multi-stakeholder co-management model that can be replicated in other fishing communities in Polarisia, resulting in reduced IUU fishing and improved LMMA management as a necessary precursor for biodiversity conservation.

PART 3: THEORY OF CHANGE VISUAL (LOGIC MODEL)

Figure 1: Logic Model of Theory of Change



SAMPLE 2: JUVENILE JUSTICE

The theory of change example below is taken from a USAID example case developed by USAID's Bureau for Policy, Planning & Learning for use in USAID training.

This example includes 3 parts:

1. Description of the case study's context
2. Theory of Change narrative
3. Examples of how to visualize the Theory of Change narrative into a logic model

PART I: CONTEXTUAL ANALYSIS

Note: A strong theory of change comes out of a robust understanding of the local context (the current state).

Youth criminal activity and violence has been a serious problem in Marshovia over the last decade, making it one of the most violent countries in the region and creating serious governance and security challenges. To address these issues, USAID's new strategy makes "improved democratic governance" a major objective of U.S. support, with "reduction in youth crime" being a key result.

There are many complex factors contributing to youth criminality; these include high rates of poverty, social inequality, unemployment, school dropouts and easy access to arms. Most significantly, Marshovia recently concluded a bloody civil war that drove nearly one million people to leave the country seeking a better life. As a result, a generation of children was left behind to be cared for by relatives since their parents emigrated to other countries. This break-up of families was highly damaging to Marshovia's society, with youth satisfying their need for love, self-esteem, and a sense of belonging by joining criminal gangs.

This rise in gangs and crime rates also coincided with a surge in the government passing harsh penalties for even minor crimes and an increasing rate of youth ending up in jail. This starts a vicious cycle in which jailed youth feel even worse about themselves. As a result of this situation, over 60 percent of the youth released from prisons each year return to criminal gangs and end up back in jail within three years.

Several influential politicians within Marshovia's national legislature are concerned about the increasing costs of keeping youth in jails and a crime rate that continues to go up and have requested support from USAID to help address these issues. These same politicians are also inspired by the experience of neighboring San Lola, where youth receive less severe punishments and enter Alternative Rehabilitation Centers (ARCs) that offer youth psycho-social support, mentoring, life-skills classes and much more. ARCs cost one-third the cost of incarceration and have achieved impressive results in reducing the number of youth who end up back in jail.

Unfortunately, while there is growing support in the Marshovian legislature for reforms, the decision to sentence youth to incarceration resides not with national politicians, but with locally-appointed judges who are accountable to the local government that appointed them. These judges tend to prefer jail time over local alternatives (e.g., ARC-like options) due to the incentive structure in place. Local options like ARCs are funded by the local government, further reducing local resources, whereas sending youth to jail is paid for by the national government.

Moreover, since local governments lack the financial means or incentives to invest in local ARCs, fewer of these options exist, and those that exist have various levels of quality due to the lack of regulations, standards, and oversight. Therefore, Marshovia's conservative judges rightly perceive that ARCs are not effective alternatives, and that jailing youth is the only viable option in most cases.

PART 2: THEORY OF CHANGE NARRATIVE

Building on the context above, further analysis and co-creation discussions with local stakeholders during the design process found that a key driver of the high crime rate among youth was the over reliance on jail time as punishment. USAID's theory of change is that if it can help break this vicious cycle through alternative sentencing of youth to Alternative Rehabilitation Centers (ARCs), then youth will develop the self-esteem and self-worth they need to resist negative influences and not return to a life of crime.

To break this cycle, the implementation team now proposes to partner with champions in the national legislature to enact policy reform that changes the incentives behind the mass incarceration of youth. Given that ARCs in San Lola cost one-third that of incarceration, USAID thinks that the Marshovian national government can similarly achieve such cost savings if it requires this incentive structure by reimbursing local governments for the costs incurred by ARCs in their districts. Such reform could be further reinforced with new requirements that local governments pay part of the costs of incarcerating youth in a national institution. USAID assumes that this legislative agenda will be successful because it believes that the electorate is similarly frustrated by the broken justice system and is ready for better justice reform.

In addition to this policy reform, USAID also plans to partner with a dozen model districts across Marshovia. In each of these districts, it will work with local government officials to establish regulatory standards and provide oversight of ARCs. In addition, it will leverage seed funding and technical assistance to new ARCs to build their capacity to improve youth outcomes after their release. USAID believes that such assistance will provide a demonstration effect to other districts where there has previously been no incentive to invest in or develop ARCs before.

Taken together, USAID believes that these changes will provide judges with the motivation and opportunity that they need to sentence more youth to ARCs. USAID also proposes to further facilitate this behavior change by brokering trainings to judges on the ARC approach, drawing on the experience in San Lola, in addition to tours of ARC demonstration sites. If judges believe that ARCs are more effective, and the local governments to whom they are accountable further endorse this choice, USAID believes that judges across the nation will increasingly prefer this option over the more-costly jail time alternative.

As more youth from Marshovia are exposed to the psycho-social programming provided by ARCs, the rate of youth returning to jail will go down and overall youth crime will ultimately drop.

PART 3: THEORY OF CHANGE VISUAL / LOGIC MODEL

This example provides three visuals, all of which represent the same theory of change narrative.

Figure 2: Logic Model / Customized Logic Model

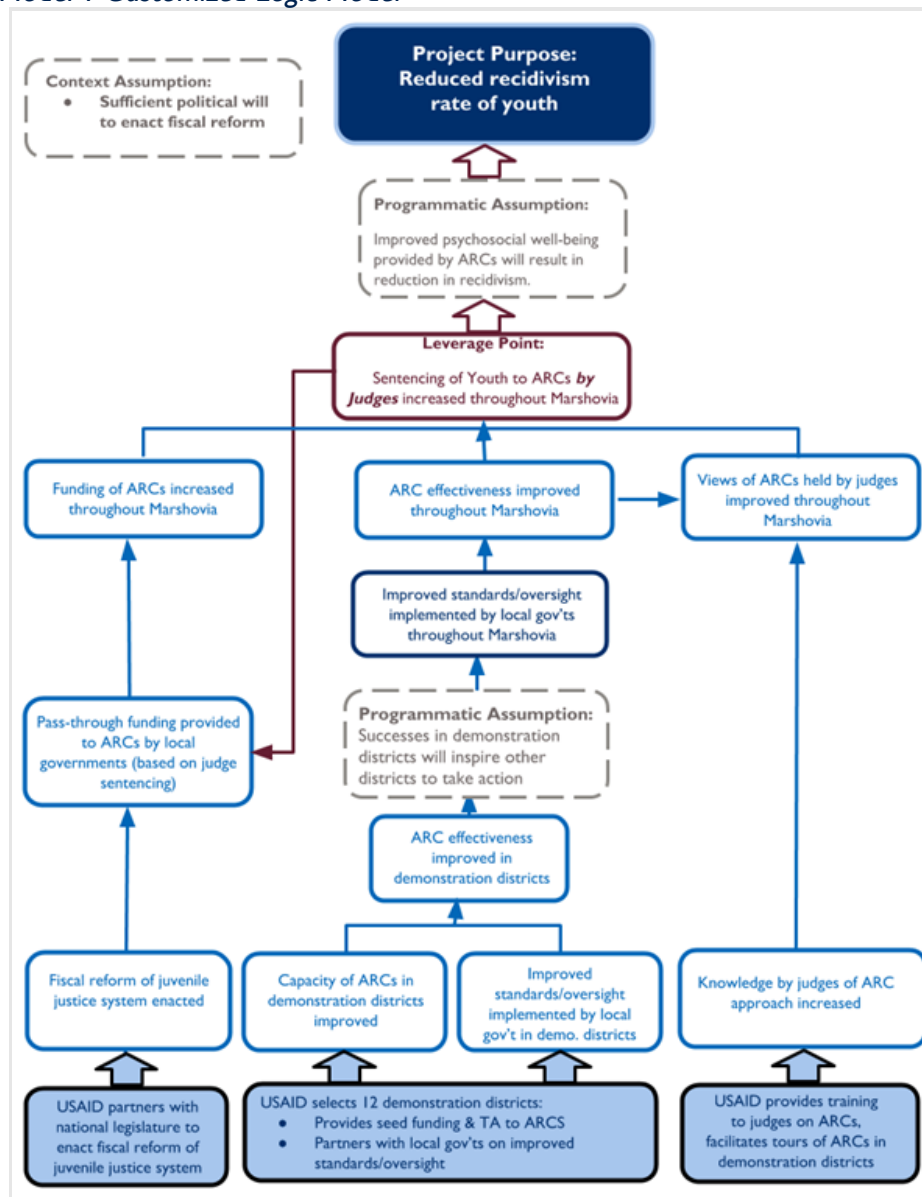


Figure 3: Logic Model 2: Results Chain

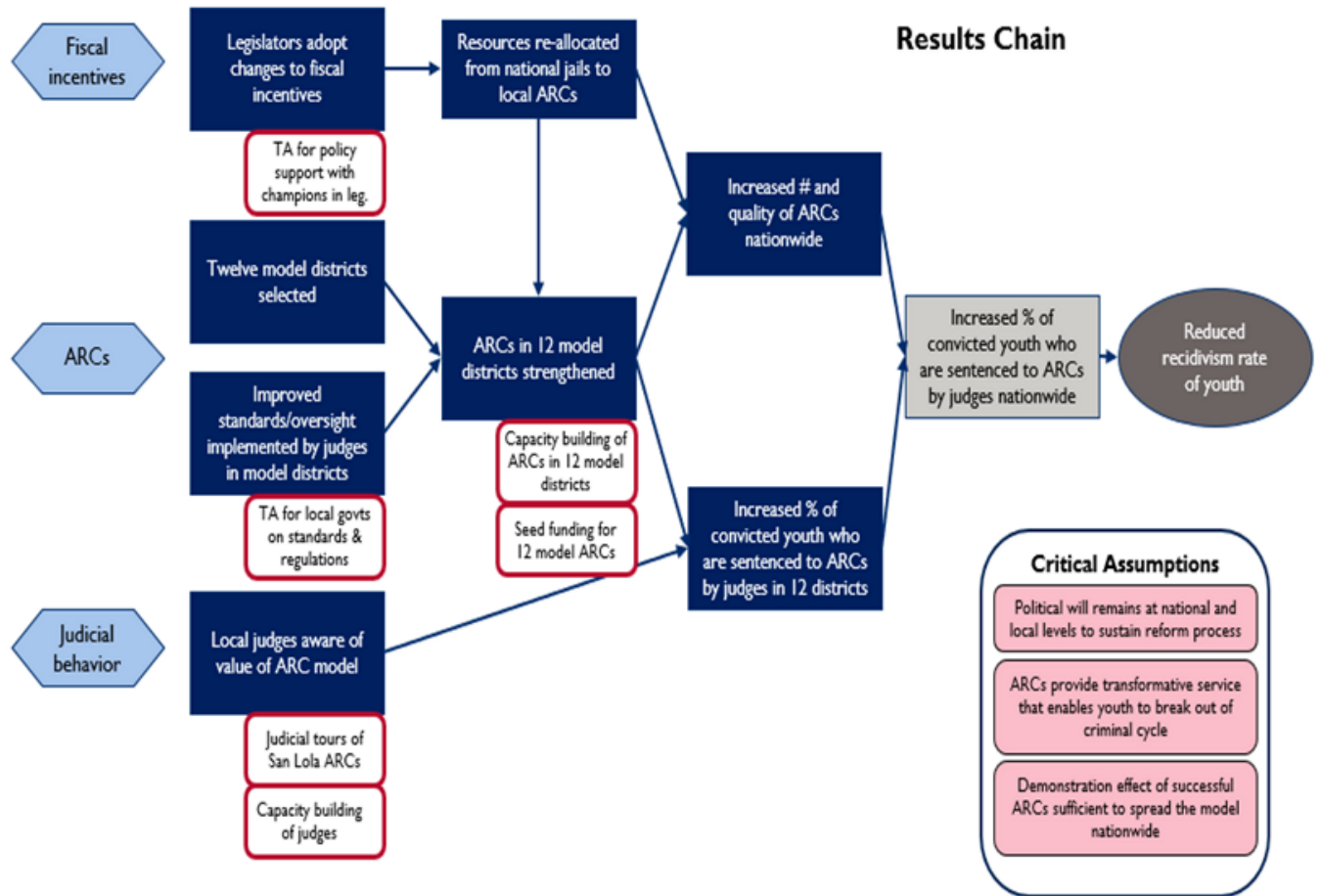


Figure 4: Logic Model 3 Actor-Oriented Model

