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Applied Political Economy Analysis Learning Review for the Human Rights Support Mechanism

Alina Rocha Menocal and Laure-Hélène Piron, The Policy Practice

FINAL SYNTHESIS REPORT

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ACRONYMS

ABA ROLI	American Bar Association Rule of Law Initiative
APEA	Applied Political Economy Analysis
CSO	civil society organization
CCD	Conectando Caminos por los Derechos Activity
DDA	Data Driven Advocacy Activity
EAJ	Expanding Access to Justice program
GESI	gender equality and social inclusion
HRSM	Human Rights Support Mechanism
ICT	information and communication technology
IEA	Information Ecosystem Assessment
LPA	Legal and Policy Analysis
LGBT+	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender/Transsexual +
PEA	Political Economy Analysis
PROGRESS	Protecting Global Rights through Sustainable Solutions Consortium
RRF	Rapid Response Fund
TWP	Thinking and Working Politically
UK	United Kingdom
US	United States
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

Executive Summary



The Human Rights Support Mechanism (HRSM), funded by the US Agency for International Development (USAID), aims to promote and protect human rights, mitigate the effects of human rights abuses, provide remedies to human rights victims, and respond rapidly to urgent and unforeseen crises. Pact, one of the consortium members, is responsible for the systematic use of applied political economy analysis (APEA) across country and regional HRSM projects. Pact commissioned The Policy Practice to undertake a Learning Review examining the use and impact of APEA through three case studies of HRSM-funded projects: Conectando Caminos por los Derechos (CCD) in Colombia, Data Driven Advocacy (DDA) in Tanzania, and Expanding Access to Justice (EAJ) in Somalia.

The Learning Review explores (i) how APEAs have been used to inform program decisions and their implementation; (ii) how insights from APEAs have influenced program achievements; and (iii) what factors have enabled and constrained the uptake of APEA and its impacts in terms of improved programming. It concludes with lessons and considerations.

TYPES OF DECISIONS AND RESULTS INFLUENCED BY APEAS

The Review found that, across all three of the case studies, APEAs have supported evidence-based decision-making and have been valued both within each project and among a wider set of in-country partners for generating data and evidence. APEAs influenced overarching choices during inception phases, such as refining the program strategy and approach to working with government, and corroborating the theory of change prepared during project design. APEAs were used to make operational decisions on a regular basis, including which issues to work on (including through rapid response mechanisms), where (the geographic focus of interventions), and which partners to engage with (in civil society and/or government, especially at the local level). APEAs have enabled projects to manage fiduciary, political, and security risks, and to respond to shifting security or political contexts. Risk management also included helping projects to identify what interventions not to support because they would not be politically feasible or would entrench patronage networks. Finally, APEA insights enabled projects to respond to pivots driven by changing USAID priorities.

The Review identified three types of achievements plausibly associated with APEAs. First, where APEAs were embedded within the overall project strategy and ways of working, they contributed to improved project relevance and adaptability. This was clearly the case in Tanzania, where being able to operate as a human rights project from 2017 to 2021 was in itself an achievement and where DDA was able to adjust as the civic space became less constrained in the mainland and in Zanzibar after 2021. It was also evident in Colombia, where the landscape on migration from Venezuela has remained extremely fluid and where APEAs and other forms of analysis have enabled CCD to respond, adapt, and take advantage of windows of opportunity. For example, APEAs helped to bring an explicit link between migration and human rights to policy debates and discussions which had heretofore remained absent.

Second, APEA-informed decisions contributed to the achievement of some specific project results. This included legal, regulatory, or policy change linked to civic space, new media and political parties in Tanzania; the adoption of a human rights-based approach to migration policy in Colombia; and some justice training and service provision in Somalia, such as training community paralegals and judges on when to use sharia law as opposed to customary law. The Somalia project also offers some counterfactual evidence: some interventions which did not follow available APEA insights proved less effective.

Third, APEAs have helped to build the credibility of the three projects across stakeholders (including government authorities and civil society organizations, CSOs) and to foster strong relationships based on trust. In Tanzania and Colombia, both CSO partners and, on some issues, the government trusted DDA and CDD because of how data had been collected and used in advocacy. DDA Working Groups exemplify how projects that ‘think and work politically’ are able to foster reform coalitions. In Somalia, research produced by EAJ was particularly valued by other donors.

FACTORS WHICH INFLUENCE THE USE OF APEAS

The Review identified several factors that have influenced the use and uptake of APEAs to inform decision-making and contribute to project achievements. These include:

Management commitment

CCD, DDA and EAJ all incorporate APEA in programming by design. HRSM committed to using APEA not only during the inception phase but also on an ongoing basis. This provided an institutional foundation for APEA in each of the projects. At an operational level, Pact led on APEA support across the consortium and all projects had at least one member of staff dedicated to APEA. In practice, the degree of buy-in from the project leadership and the value they ascribed to analysis was uneven across the case studies. The level and/or quality of resourcing – both in-house and external support – varied, which affected uptake.

Tailoring of APEAs to project needs and context

Beyond the inception phase and annual APEAs, each project incorporated APEA slightly differently in their decision-making, responding to how the project was managed and context-specific factors. For example, DDA in Tanzania also produced quarterly APEAs; CCD in Colombia used a range of analytical tools in addition to APEA; and EAJ in Somalia conducted political economy-informed research (such as on sharia law, land dispute management or in specific regions) and hired local political economy experts who provided on demand advice.

In each case, the context has shaped the way APEAs have been undertaken and socialized, and project teams have approached APEA processes in ways that they have felt are suitable to conditions on the ground. EAJ, for instance, decided to share APEA findings on a need-to-know basis, because of what it perceived to be APEA-related security risks in Somalia. By contrast, APEAs in Tanzania are a DDA team-wide endeavor, while in Colombia, findings from APEAs have been shared more broadly beyond CCD itself.

Use of APEAs

More regular and/or lighter-touch APEAs make it possible to identify changes in context, opportunities, and constraints on a more regular basis, and to inform decision-making accordingly for example through rapid response mechanisms grants. In addition, while broad, some baseline APEA were especially useful at the start of a project to provide essential context and information to staff and partners, and to validate an overall approach, deeper and more fine-grained APEAs focused on specific issues have proven very important to inform specific decision-making processes (e.g. on locality or partners to engage with, or thematic issues to prioritize).

The Review found evidence of uptake when APEAs were perceived as adding new insights because of their quality (e.g. rigor of research). The use of local staff (who brought a more nuanced understanding of contextual realities) and/or consultants (who provided facilitation and expertise) also contributed to quality. At times, there has been a trade-off between research quality and accessibility of findings, which projects have managed differently.

APEA as a mindset

The case studies show that APEAs are more than reports. They are a mindset through which contexts are analyzed, options are discussed and selected, and relationships with stakeholders managed on an ongoing basis to foster coalitions for change. Pact has sought to nurture APEA skills (including in terms of guidance, training, and outsourced support). However, this has not always been sufficient to infuse APEA as a lens, and consortium dynamics, ownership and buy-in matter as well.

APEA uptake seems to benefit from an open team culture, whereby findings can be shared internally, diverse views can be heard, and project lessons can be internalized. A more hierarchical or fragmented team culture seems to lead to APEA processes that are less inclusive and participatory and/or that can undermine the extent to which insights from APEAs inform decisions on a regular basis.

USAID's role and ways of working

USAID itself exerts considerable influence on the extent to which APEA can be used to inform project decisions and how deep that process can go. When USAID strategic priorities have changed, this has required a readjustment on grounds that may have little to do with APEA insights. In one of the case studies, a strategic shift linked to US geostrategic objectives resulted in fewer project achievements than if the project had remained more engaged in its original regions.

In addition, the Review found that, despite corporate commitments on paper, in practice USAID has provided considerably less flexibility and space for its implementing partners to test, experiment, and take risks. USAID has tried to enable some flexibility through modalities such as rapid response mechanisms and by defining project objectives broadly enough that projects can pivot activities or decide what to focus on as long as such choices can be justified (including on the basis of evidence from APEAs and other forms of analysis).

LESSONS FOR OTHER PROJECTS

The Learning Review identified some lessons that may be relevant to other projects that seek to think and work politically through the use of APEAs.

- 1 APEA embedded in project cycle management systems on an ongoing basis can inform decisions more explicitly** and thereby contribute to project achievements. But, as the three projects we looked at help to illustrate, there is no set way to do this.
- 2 Staff mindsets and soft skills (and not just technical expertise) matter for APEA/TWP and its uptake**, especially at the leadership level. APEAs cannot influence decision-making if management start from what they perceive as technically sound, rather than also considering what is politically feasible.
- 3 Dedicated leadership and staff time for APEA can ensure this lens actually influences decisions.** This can include time to identify questions and develop terms of reference, to carry out research, to undertake the analysis as a team, to share findings with USAID and other stakeholders, or to oversee rapid response mechanisms to respond to new insights derived from APEAs.
- 4 APEAs that are conducted on a more regular basis can enable projects to adapt more readily in response to changes in contextual realities.** However, the frequency of the analysis will depend on the needs of the team and its capacity to undertake and use it.
- 5 APEAs that are focused on a specific issue or problem can lead to greater uptake.** When APEAs focus on well defined issues on which the project wants to intervene, they are more likely to have operationally relevant findings. Broader contextual APEAs can have value as an induction or a foundation for knowledge.
- 6 It is important to ensure that APEAs are conducted and information is collected in ways that are context- and conflict-sensitive.** This will reduce the risks associated with the APEA process itself, which could undermine the wider project if mishandled.
- 7 However, a working culture that values the sharing of information and discussion of findings and analysis within the team is also crucial** for APEA uptake in decision-making. Confidential APEAs may not influence team decisions to the same extent, and this is a trade-off that teams need to consider.
- 8 Involvement of USAID staff in APEA processes is important for buy-in and uptake.** It can lead to a shared vision and influences resourcing for APEAs.
- 9 The political economy of USAID (and the US Government) also matters** because the agency has considerable influence on the extent to which APEA can inform the design, focus, and implementation of a given project. In some contexts, the US Government may be less willing to incorporate or act on APEA-based considerations that are not consistent with its internal policy priorities.

PROJECT DECISIONS / IMPLEMENTATION INFLUENCED BY APEA

Building a critical evidence base on key democracy and human rights issues that would otherwise be lacking

Nurturing and amplifying internally-led drivers for change

Selecting relevant, feasible thematic areas for engagement

Selecting geographic areas

Designing responsive, fit-for-purpose interventions

Confirming assumptions and strategic decisions

Developing politically smart engagement strategies and adjusting to major contextual shifts

Responding appropriately to donor-driven strategic shifts

Identifying risks and windows of opportunity for rapid response grants

PROJECT DECISIONS / IMPLEMENTATION INFLUENCED BY APEA

Building the credibility of projects and fostering strong relationships based on trust across stakeholders (including government authorities and CSOs).

Improving project relevance and adaptability

Enabling projects to safely operate in constrained civic space and take advantage of openings as they emerge

Contributing to policy discourse and shaping policy agenda among government counterparts and donor community

Empowering CSO partners to provide government offices with evidence for policymaking



1. Introduction



The Human Rights Support Mechanism (HRSM), funded by the US Agency for International Development (USAID), aims to promote and protect human rights, mitigate the effects of human rights abuses, provide remedies to human rights victims, and respond rapidly to urgent and unforeseen crises. HRSM is delivered by the Protecting Global Rights through Sustainable Solutions (PROGRESS) consortium, led by Freedom House, with consortium partners Pact, the American Bar Association Rule of Law Initiative (ABA ROLI), Internews, and Search for Common Ground.

Within PROGRESS, Pact is responsible for the systematic use of applied political economy analysis (APEA) across country and regional HRSM projects. The goal is to ground HRSM human rights interventions in a nuanced understanding of local power dynamics and other contextual features. Box 1 at the end of this Introduction explains what APEA is.

Pact commissioned Alina Rocha Menocal and Laure-Hélène Piron from The Policy Practice to undertake a Learning Review examining the use and impact of APEA in three HRSM-funded projects: Conectando Caminos por los Derechos (CCD) in Colombia, Data Driven Advocacy (DDA) in Tanzania, and Expanding Access to Justice (EAJ) in Somalia.

The Learning Review's objectives were to:

- Understand the extent to which APEA contributes or does not contribute to project decision-making;
- Document examples of when these decisions have led to project results or outcomes that might not have emerged otherwise;
- Identify the barriers and enablers for APEA to contribute to project decision-making;
- Provide lessons and recommendations for the PROGRESS consortium's approach to APEA for human rights programming moving forward, including ensuring APEA is used to adapt programming for improved results.

This synthesis report brings together key findings, lessons, implications, and considerations from the three case studies in order to inform further APEA practice and its uptake among PROGRESS consortium partners.

The report is structured as follows. After this Introduction, Section 2 outlines the methodology, including the key questions the Review sought to address and our data collection process. Sections 3, 4, and 5 provide a synthesis of the main findings from the Tanzania, Colombia, and Somalia case studies, respectively. In Section 6, we identify key factors that have emerged across all three case

studies as important in influencing the use and impact of APEA. Based on this analysis, Section 7 draws out lessons and considerations for greater APEA uptake and impact in future HRSM programming. Annexes 1 and 2 present, respectively, the list of persons interviewed and documents reviewed.

The three case studies on which this synthesis is based have not been made available in full as part of this report because they are not intended to be public documents. These may be made available upon request at the discretion of Pact and relevant partners.

BOX 1: What is (applied) political economy analysis?

Political economy analysis (PEA) is an analytical approach with a long tradition in the social sciences that has been increasingly used in the international development field over the past two decades. It enables a deeper and sounder understanding of the contexts in which development actors work. PEA uses methods drawn from economics, political science, history, sociology, and anthropology to understand why things work the way they do – and not how they should work in idealized conditions; how change happens or can be blocked; and what this implies for what reforms may be more or less likely given contextual realities.

As defined by Pact (2018), PEA helps in understanding ‘the underlying interests and incentives that explain the decisions and behavior of key actors’. It requires thinking critically about the environment within which projects operate and defining a realistic strategy for supporting reform. PEA is a lens or a mindset, and not simply a one-off product or report; it is about asking the ‘why’ questions repeatedly and exploring what truly motivates stakeholders – even if the process unveils uncomfortable realities.

As used in international development, applied PEA is thus about lifting the lid and seeing what is going on ‘underneath the surface’ in order to inform and shape more realistic and feasible interventions. It does so by exploring:

- The role of **structural factors, institutions** – or ‘the rules of the game’, which can be both formal and informal, and more or less visible – **and actors**, and how these interact;
- The **incentives, interests and distribution of resources and power** among different political, economic, security, and social actors;
- How these **relationships, interactions, dynamics and behaviors evolve over time and shape prospects for progressive change** – including opportunities and constraints in supporting democracy and protecting human rights.

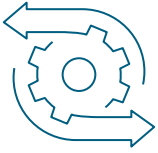
A crucial insight from APEA is that development processes and efforts to promote change are profoundly complex and uncertain. As such, practitioners need to work in ways that enable them to navigate such complexity. They should be ready to experiment, learn, adapt, and respond flexibly to the changing context and to new evidence. This is the heart of what has come to be known as thinking and working politically (TWP).

It is also essential to highlight that PEA is not a magic bullet that will provide ready-made solutions or ensure that results are achieved. Rather, PEA, and TWP more broadly, should be seen as an approach and mindset – or a compass that can help in navigating complex political landscapes and prospects for reform through better-informed decision-making processes.

Sources: See Rocha Menocal et al. 2018, Pact 2018 and Whaites et al. 2023 among others



2. Methodology



This Learning Review explores (i) how APEAs have been used to inform program decisions and implementation; (ii) how insights from APEAs have influenced program achievements to date, and (iii) what factors have enabled and constrained the uptake of APEA and its impacts in terms of improved programming. It is not an evaluation of whether and how reviewed HRSM projects have achieved all their results.

We adopted a theory-based approach incorporating principles of contribution analysis and process tracing, all through a political economy lens. We explored:

- What APEAs each project has done (in terms of process and content);
- Whether and how these APEAs have influenced documented programmatic decisions and implementation more broadly;
- Whether and how these APEA-informed decisions have contributed to programmatic achievements as reported by our interviewees.

We defined outcomes in terms of what interviewees and documents identified as the main achievements of the project. These were not limited to project results as defined in logframes or results frameworks but could also include other effects of the projects, planned or unplanned, that seemed particularly pertinent to our interviewees and that could be traced back to the use of and/or a decision linked to APEA.

We determined whether APEA had contributed to a decision and, through that decision and its implementation, to project achievements, by looking at whether:

- A project decision was consistent with an APEA finding or recommendation;
- APEAs were part of the evidence base that informed decision-making;
- An achievement was consistent with the theory of change behind the APEA-informed decision, in particular political economy factors;
- The contribution was consistent with the perceptions of those we interviewed (who had been involved in APEA processes, project decision-making, or project activities).

We collected data through a document review and remote interviews:

- A review of HRSM and project documents for each case study;
- An interview with Pact's Governance team, based in Washington, DC;
- A small number of interviews with consortium staff and implementing partners involved in each case study (nine people in Colombia, four in Somalia, and five in Tanzania);

- Interviews with relevant USAID staff (one person in Colombia, two in Somalia, and one in Tanzania) and interviews with two non-US donors (to help situate how EAJ works in Somalia compared with other internationally supported efforts).

We validated findings from all three projects through an extensive round of feedback and comments from Pact DC-based staff and project staff on each case study. We further validated synthesis findings and tested lessons and implications through two focus group discussions, one with DC-based staff from Pact and Freedom House and the other with Pact, Freedom House, ABA ROLI, and Internews staff from the case study projects.

LIMITATIONS

This qualitative Learning Review had a limited scope and budget. Some of the main limitations are explained here.

Pact selected the three case studies for this Review. The selection was purposive, with the aim of showcasing a range of HRSM projects where there had been uptake of APEA findings and recommendations and where staff had demonstrated a TWP mindset.

DDA, CCD, and EAJ have all conducted a substantial baseline or foundational APEA, and each project engages in ongoing APEA-related activities and uses APEA findings to inform decisions, especially beyond inception. Pact conducted a mid-term learning review of APEA use under HRSM in 2019 (Pact, 2019), which examined which factors had led to greater uptake of APEA findings and recommendations, including staff involvement, APEA timing, and the narrowness of the research question. In this exercise, therefore, we did not review HRSM projects that had not made relatively more systematic use of APEAs or that had conducted only light-touch or one-off APEA studies to understand why uptake and influence of APEA had remained more limited in those these cases.

Overall, while we reviewed a large number of documents, we spoke to only a very limited number of stakeholders not directly involved in the delivery of each project. This is important in terms of triangulation and the level of confidence we can have in the contribution of APEA to decision-making and of that decision-making to project achievements to date.

We have ascribed **levels of confidence based on the evidence we have to substantiate our findings** (including findings related to how a decision was made using APEA, how APEA is linked to the implementation of a project or a decision, and how this has contributed to programmatic achievements). As such, we are not rating the validity of the findings themselves but rather the quality and depth of the evidence behind them – which, as noted above, is not very expansive. The scale is as follows:

- **Very high:** all the people we interviewed corroborated the finding and the finding was also corroborated in relevant documentation.
- **High:** more than half of the people we interviewed corroborated the finding and the finding was also corroborated in relevant documentation.
- **Low:** less than half of the people we interviewed corroborated the finding and/or the finding could not be corroborated in relevant documentation.

The traceability of links between insights from APEA and decisions has varied. It has been easier to identify links in Tanzania and Colombia than in Somalia, given the relative separation of APEA processes from project management in the latter. The extent to which achievements can be traced back to decisions informed by APEAs is therefore also mixed. Again, this has been more straightforward in Colombia and Tanzania, with the connection less clear in Somalia, given both how APEAs have been shared within the EAJ team and with the Review team and the security and political factors that influenced EAJ decision-making regardless of any APEAs.





3. Data Driven Advocacy (DDA), Tanzania

3.1 Description of the project and main achievements to date



DDA is a \$11.5 million, six-year project (2017–2023) that seeks to improve and sustain Tanzanian rights-focused civil society's ability to advocate for, and influence policy on, key national-level human rights issues using better data and information to drive results. Activities take place mostly in Dar es Salaam, Dodoma, Arusha, and Zanzibar.

DDA is led by Freedom House. Pact is an implementing partner and is responsible for the APEA process (as well as capacity development and grant-making).

DDA has three objectives:

Objective 1: Platforms for increased cooperation and collaboration among like-minded organizations for evidence-based advocacy are strengthened.

Objective 2: Civil society's abilities to collect, generate, monitor, and report independent and reliable information concerning human rights abuses are strengthened.

Objective 3: Civil society organizations, networks, and key individuals are able to respond to urgent and unanticipated needs.

The project mentors and provides technical assistance to rights-focused civil society organizations (CSOs) in data collection (including gathering citizen perceptions and human rights monitoring), evidence-based advocacy, and digital and physical protection; supports those CSOs to build or strengthen platforms for coordination with diverse stakeholders; builds their institutional capacity to ensure sustainability of outcomes; and provides them with the resources and mentorship they require to better engage with the government and contribute to a more inclusive, data-driven, human rights-focused policy-making process. Themes have included civic space and legal context; land rights; gender-based violence; education rights; and the rights of marginalized populations, women and youth.

The main project achievements include the following:

- The project has been able to operate in a constrained political and civic space context.
- The Government of Tanzania is becoming more receptive to CSO advocacy on key rights issues, in part thanks to the use of strong evidence presented compellingly through a cohesive civil society voice.
- CSO working groups supported by the project are implementing advocacy strategies around priority rights issues, engaging with the media, the private sector, and government partners.

- Some partner CSOs have improved their organizational management capacity.
- Some partner CSOs have identified challenges and opportunities related to human rights and have implemented rapid response strategies to emerging issues.

3.2 How APEAs have been carried out

The program undertakes a range of analysis:

- **Baseline APEA.** The 2018 baseline analysis identified issues on which civil society and the media could advocate with DDA support, and organizations to partner with. DDA staff were trained in the Pact APEA methodology prior to participating in the first APEA, led by Pact DC staff and consultants. Together, they designed the questions and took part in two weeks of fieldwork. The APEA was conducted by nine individuals (Pact, Freedom House, and consultants) who interviewed 75 persons in six locations. A consultant led the team discussions and data analysis to ensure triangulation. The APEA recommended that DDA focus on economic and social rights, with space to work on gender-based violence and livelihoods, with a different approach in Zanzibar compared with the mainland. It counselled against supporting media agencies or CSOs that were openly critical of government and advised instead finding reform champions. It also recommended an iterative APEA approach with quarterly monitoring of key contextual indicators and three possible operating scenarios.
- **Annual APEAs.** APEAs are undertaken annually by DDA staff through a combination of desk review and fieldwork, to contribute to annual work plan updates. The process is led by the DDA Pact APEA coordinator, with progressively less support from Pact DC staff.
 - » The December 2018 APEA served to validate baseline APEA findings. Forty-one persons were interviewed by six staff members in four locations. The APEA documented a further shrinking of civic space but identified new reform champions. The APEA was used to confirm thematic topics and guide the project's Zanzibar strategy. It concluded that Mbeya was not a valid area for subnational work but that alternative media should be a priority.
 - » The December 2019 APEA examined how to expand DDA to new areas and themes (e.g. in Dodoma, including on gender-based violence in 2020).
 - » The 2021 APEA considered how to respond to the new political context under President Samia Hassan. It identified a number of improvements in the CSO operating context but also that repressive laws had not been reformed. DDA shifted from a focus on assisting CSOs to operate under restrictive rules towards making use of political and policy openings.
- **Quarterly APEAs.** DDA's quarterly reports to USAID include a context analysis, also prepared by the Pact APEA leads. These help in navigating the context and assessing risk levels on a more regular basis. Themes have included:
 - » Challenges facing **youth-led organizations** and how they can engage with government (in 2021);
 - » Stakeholders' perceptions of the **new political context in Zanzibar** following the 2020 election to inform the DDA work plan and advocacy strategy for the Zanzibar Working Group (in 2021);

- » **Prospects for legal reform under President Samia Hassan**, by exploring the incentives of the ruling party, government officials, and civil society actors, and how to bring spoilers on board. This work made recommendations on how CSOs should engage with the ongoing reform of repressive laws (in 2022);
- » **Preparedness to engage in constitutional reform** to decide possible interventions to advocate for full citizen engagement (in 2022).
- **Weekly and monthly environmental scanning** of the political context. DDA also undertakes these more regular assessments, using social and traditional media sources. This informs the focus of annual and quarterly APEAs.

We found that APEA has become DDA's overall analytical approach, drawing on both Pact and USAID APEA methodologies. Studies are now done in-house, led by Pact DDA staff, who have benefited from extensive Pact training over the years. DDA seems to particularly value stakeholder interviews; there was less evidence of the use of document reviews as part of the regular APEA methodology. Apart from the baseline APEA, studies do not seem to grapple with some of the deeper political economy challenges (e.g. ruling party dominance) but rather try to navigate current interests and entry points around a well-defined area (e.g. youth-led organizations).

The process is participatory and involves the entire DDA team, either in the research or in drawing operational implications. USAID is involved in the APEA process, from looking at the terms of reference and APEA questions, to commenting on drafts and disseminating findings. A draft presentation with key finding is shared with USAID for feedback prior to writing up and finalizing the report. The report is shared across the DDA team, Freedom House, and Pact as well as USAID. Annual or quarterly reports are kept short and are usually complemented by a PowerPoint to make them more accessible. Findings (but not the reports themselves, because of sensitivities) are shared with DDA's advisory committee and partner CSOs.

3.3 How APEA has informed key decisions and contributed to achievements to date

How have APEAs influenced project decisions?

Pact has traced how APEAs have informed DDA decisions through three decision trackers, which we triangulated through interviews with a small sample of DDA staff, USAID staff, and DDA partners as well as through the extensive DDA project documentation. The level of confidence (based on the quality of our evidence) is indicated in square brackets after each finding.

- **Overall engagement strategy** [very high level of confidence]. The baseline APEA analyzed DDA's operating space and contributed to DDA's decision to adopt a constructive approach as opposed to more confrontational advocacy, and ensured it operated within the restrictive legal framework. A detailed understanding of how to respect government restrictions meant that DDA partner CSOs were able to conduct research and share evidence with government officials in a way that did not infringe the Statistics Act and other restrictive legislation and practices (for example adjusting their language when researching the situation of pregnant girls who were no longer allowed to attend secondary education). DDA required the registration of Working Group members

it supported, as the government did not allow for informal coalitions. It also required grantees to be compliant with the Non-Governmental Organization Registrar requirements and provided them with technical assistance and mentorship to this and to avoid administrative harassment.

- **Selection of feasible themes** [very high level of confidence]. DDA staff identified 'go/'no go' areas in a context of increasingly constrained civic space between 2017 and 2020 through APEAs. DDA selected some 'softer' issues, such as related to women, people with disabilities, or youth, but also identified how to work on some issues that at first appeared highly sensitive, such as land rights. APEAs have confirmed the issues DDA could not safely address, such as freedom of expression, cashew nut production, and LGBT+ rights. Ongoing context monitoring has meant that new advocacy themes can be identified, such as in 2021 Zanzibar identity cards, which were a priority for youth.
- **Stakeholder mapping** [high level of confidence]. This has been a regular feature of APEAs. It has enabled the formation of thematic Working Groups, especially at the start of the project but also during implementation (e.g. for Dodoma or youth activities). DDA has not operated through existing CSO coalitions but has been able to identify how to put together and support new thematic coalitions that constitute the various Working Groups. Stakeholder mappings have also identified spoilers, and ways to work with or around them to achieve project objectives.
- **Rapid response grants** [low level of confidence]. The DDA team closely connected its contextual analysis to the use of its rapid response grant modality, which was part of the initial design. Regular analysis of the context demonstrated how quickly opportunities could appear or close. The rapid response grant modality enabled DDA to respond more flexibly to new opportunities as identified through APEAs. An example of parliamentary influencing is given below.
- **Adjusting to major contextual changes** [high level of confidence]. The administration of President Samia Hassan, following the death of President Magufuli in 2021, created a more conducive operating context for CSOs. DDA used APEA findings to shift from assisting CSOs to operate under restrictive rules towards helping them make use of political and policy openings to influence the revision of repressive laws, regulations, and policies.
- **Adapting to USAID strategic shifts** [high level of confidence]. When USAID Tanzania decided to make youth one of its strategic priorities in the 2020 Country Development Cooperation Strategy, DDA was able to quickly undertake a new APEA on youth issues (in addition to drawing on learning to date with its youth partners). This positioned DDA for more youth capacity development work during the costed extension in 2022. The youth APEA also helped DDA adjust how it was supporting youth – for example increasing the number of youth representatives in its advisory committee; tailoring its capacity development for youth organizations; supporting dialogue to discuss youth issues through setting up a youth subgroup outside Dar; advocating for a national youth council on the mainland; and convening an annual Tanzania youth forum.
- **Work planning and ending activities** [low level of confidence]. Interviewees linked some APEAs, such as that on youth, directly to new work plan activities. APEA insights have also contributed to not continuing activities as they have become riskier. For example, while there was evidence that the government had interfered in the cashew nut market, the APEA also suggested the market was too dangerous to address, so the activity was cancelled.

How have these project decisions contributed to achievements?

Box 2: Selected DDA achievements to date

1. The project has been able to operate in a constrained political and civic space context.
2. The Government of Tanzania is becoming more receptive to CSO advocacy on key rights issues, in part thanks to the use of strong evidence presented compellingly through a cohesive civil society voice.
3. CSO working groups supported by the project are implementing advocacy strategies around priority rights issues, engaging with the media, the private sector, and government partners.
4. Some partner CSOs have improved their organizational management capacity.
5. Some partner CSOs have identified challenges and opportunities related to human rights and have implemented rapid response strategies to emerging issues.

DDA's regular APEAs, and more generally its TWP mindset, can be linked to the following high-level results:

- **Regular APEAs have enabled DDA to operate in a closed political context** [very high level of confidence]. Under President Magufuli (2015–2021), many donor-funded human rights and democracy projects had to suspend or dramatically refocus their activities – but DDA was able to operate. Its focus on engagement with government, rather than confrontation, was critical and can be traced to the baseline APEA.
- **This overall strategy and the Working Group structure have led DDA to play a convening role** [low level of confidence]. Consistent with a TWP approach and as recommended in the baseline APEA, DDA has supported coalitions to advocate for politically feasible and technically sound changes. APEA insights have supported the constitution and operations of thematic Working Groups, which have provided a unified voice in a repressive context. Reportedly, DDA's evidence-based approach has become popular in Tanzania, which has increased DDA's visibility and led to more requests for capacity development, including from government.
- **Recent APEAs have contributed to DDA adapting to the improved political context** [high level of confidence]. President Samia Hassan has been associated with an improved rhetoric on political and civic space. There have been fewer legal and policy changes to date, but DDA has shifted towards more engagement in these processes, which has contributed to some of the specific successes listed below.

Evidence of specific legal, policy, or advocacy results include the following [low levels of confidence]:

- DDA's influence on **political parties' legislation amendments** cannot be traced to a single APEA but to the general approach of the project, which is based in part on APEAs. DDA supported partner organizations to undertake policy and legal analysis. It contributed to two organizations being heard by government on the amendment of the Political Parties Act because it enabled them to work through official systems, by showing they had been invited by government to collect citizens' opinion and to make recommendations to parliamentary debates. This was supported through the rapid response grant mechanism.

- The APEA-influenced project strategy contributed to **improved relationships with government**. This included the Registrar of Non-Governmental Organizations in Zanzibar dropping charges against DDA-supported CSOs, the selection of DDA to provide capacity development to the Zanzibar Maisha Bora Foundation, and DDA collaboration with the Zanzibar Law Review Commission to improve the regulatory framework for CSOs.
- DDA Working Group 3 on **new and alternative media** has advocated for a good working environment for media. According to one interview, this has contributed to less stringent regulations, such as a reduction in YouTube licensing fees. The Year 1 APEA determined that alternative media might be a viable topic for a third Working Group. This was validated through the Year 2 APEA, which identified openings for advocacy and explored this new Working Group.
- DDA's analysis of **youth priorities** and how best to support **youth-led organizations** has contributed to the results achieved to date in this area (and to an increased budget for capacity development under the extended DDA grant). It is, however, not appropriate to trace youth-related results to the quarterly youth APEA elements, as DDA took a range of decisions based on different sources of evidence, such as organizational capacity assessments, and other experiences that shaped this aspect of the project.





4. Conectando Caminos por los Derechos (CCD), Colombia

4.1 Description of the project and main achievements to date



The CCD Activity is a \$19 million, four-year (2020–2024) associate award under HRSM implemented by Freedom House, Pact (lead implementing partner), ABA ROLI, and Internews. Working across 11 urban municipalities in a phased approach in partnership with 70 local organizations, it aims to support the transition from short-term humanitarian to long-term development assistance for migrants, Colombian returnees, and receptor communities through improved citizen security and community cohesion in migrant receptor communities.

With a focus on strengthening local systems, processes, and the capacity of the Government of Colombia and of civil society actors, CCD has four core objectives:

Objective 1: Supporting the prevention of human rights violations.

Objective 2: Strengthening human rights protection systems.

Objective 3: Responding to human rights violations.

Objective 4: Responding rapidly to changing human rights circumstances and the needs of mixed migration flows.

As CCD enters its third year of implementation, the project's main achievements to date, as identified through program documentation and interviews undertaken with CCD implementing partners and USAID, include:

- Putting **migration from Venezuela and human rights** at the center of the public policy agenda, and contributing to a more consistent **incorporation of a migration lens** in national policies around human rights;
- Building the **capacity of local human rights organizations** and CSO human rights protection networks working with (and often led by) migrants from Venezuela;
- Fostering more **productive relationships** between these local CSOs and human rights protection networks on the one hand and local public authorities on the other, including in terms of CSO participation in migration policy discussions at the local level.

4.2 How APEAs have been carried out

Multiplicity of analytical frameworks

CCD seems to be unique among the three case studies in that, in addition to APEAs, it uses several other distinct tools and frameworks of analysis. Each CCD implementing partner leads on and undertakes its own analysis based on its respective organizational tool or framework. See Box 3 (for more detail on each of these frameworks please see the Colombia Case Study report available separately).

BOX 3: Analytical frameworks that the CCD uses

Applied Political Economy Analysis (APEA): led by Pact and carried out continuously throughout program implementation.

Social Network Analysis (SNA): led by Freedom House, applied once during the inception phase.

Information Ecosystem Assessment (IEA): led by Internews and carried out continuously throughout program implementation.

Legal and Policy Analysis (LPA): led by ABA ROLI and carried out twice to date, once during the inception phase and once following a major policy shift.

Gender and Social Inclusion Analysis (GESI): led by ABA ROLI and carried out once during the inception phase as the basis on which to design the program's GESI strategy. CCD is currently carrying out a mid-term evaluation to document advances on the latter.

Actor Mapping: led by Pact and carried out according to the program's municipal phased approach, with updates at each APEA iteration.

While each distinct form of analysis can generate unique insights and findings based on its specific methodology, focus, and overall objective, it is also the case that having so many frameworks and tools adds layers of complexity. It can lead to overlaps and duplication of effort despite attempts to coordinate or streamline data collection processes on the ground. This proliferation of analytical tools and frameworks may have arisen because the inception phase proved too compressed for all it hoped to achieve. Setting up a consortium of this nature takes time, and some of the CCD implementing partners did not have a presence in Colombia before CCD was started. Impressions from our interviews are that this restricted the ability of CCD to reflect on how its different parts and partners came together. The limited time available to conduct the extensive analysis planned meant there was not enough space for CCD to think in a meaningful and purposeful manner about finding synergies across analyses, streamlining the analytical process, coordinating in the field, etc.

As the lead on APEAs across the CCD consortium, Pact has sought to build synergies across the different tools and to provide an overarching analytical umbrella or framework that is guided by the kinds of 'why' questions that underpin PEA. Yet, within the consortium, the APEA process has tended to be seen as a deliverable that Pact is responsible for, rather than as something that is more broadly shared and owned. To the credit of the CCD team, on the other hand, USAID has felt that the aggregated analysis shared with it is holistic and comprehensive despite the challenge of having distinct frameworks.

Skills and resources for APEAs

Prior to the start of CCD, implementing partners, including the Pact team in Colombia as well as others, were not familiar with PEA as a methodology. Support on APEAs and TWP has been provided (including training and ongoing support from Pact DC), which has been valued.

Pact has a full-time staff member who leads on the rapid response component of CCD, is in charge of APEAs operationally and analytically, and has played a significant role in each APEA iteration. Nevertheless, there are concerns that APEAs can be quite resource-intensive, and that the project does not have sufficient resources in-house (in terms of labor, skill, and time) to carry it out. As such, CCD has also relied extensively on local consultants to support the undertaking of APEAs.

Other consortium partners have not been involved in undertaking the analysis itself. Rather, they have been brought in when the findings are shared, for their inputs and feedback. But including them more thoroughly and consistently across the APEA process (e.g. in the development of its methodology, focus, purpose, objectives, etc.) could help with the identification of synergies with other frameworks, and with increasing buy-in across consortium partners. USAID itself does not seem to be involved in the APEA process (e.g. looking at the terms of reference and APEA questions or commenting on drafts) but does engage with CCD on the basis of the substance of this analysis. It defers to this analysis and the knowledge and expertise of the CCD team in relation to project decisions and activities.

APEA iterations

There have been four iterations of the APEA in CCD to date; other forms of analysis have been less recurrent (see Box 3). The first iteration, during the inception phase (through October 2020), was the most intensive and had a large, exploratory scope that needed to be covered in what was perceived to be a very tight timeframe (approximately 2.5 months). When CCD was started in Colombia in May 2020, there was very limited knowledge within the country about the linkages between human rights and migration, and implications for a longer-term developmental response to the crisis that focuses on improving citizen security and social cohesion. In combination with CCD's other analytical assessments undertaken during the inception phase, this APEA thus set out to explore the relationship between human rights and migration in the Colombian context. This APEA (and other analyses) covered CCD's four Phase 1 municipalities and explored the needs of migrants and services available to them (CCD, 2020e). Insights and findings emerging from all the analysis undertaken during the inception phase were brought together in an Analytical Frameworks Final Report in November 2020 and presented to USAID and stakeholders in a public event in October 2020.

The next two APEA iterations (undertaken from the end of the inception phase in October 2020 through July 2021) focused on new CCD municipalities, and the last one undertaken to date (between July 2021 and July 2022) revisited four CCD municipalities. With each iteration of the APEAs, there were efforts to refine questions, incorporate new areas of enquiry (e.g. GESI and violence against women, xenophobia, workings of new government decrees around the regularization of migrants from Venezuela, etc.), and to update the Actor Mapping. Nevertheless, there were differing views among CCD consortium partners about the value added of APEA iterations beyond the first one, with

one expressing that later iterations did not reveal anything new even as they expanded to new geographies.

4.3 How APEA has informed key decisions and contributed to achievements to date

Our analysis shows that APEAs have influenced some key CCD decisions, and that some of these decisions have in turn contributed to reported achievements. Highlights include the following.

How have APEAs influenced project decisions?

- Through APEA, CCD has been able to **design and implement interventions that are fit for purpose** [very high level of confidence] – that is, interventions that are highly responsive to conditions on the ground, including in particular through the Rapid Response Mechanism. APEAs have provided evidence to respond, adjust to, and take advantage of openings in a rapidly shifting and complex environment. For example, APEAs enabled CCD to respond to the unexpected government decree regularizing the status of migrants, which opened an important window of opportunity to obtain traction on the agenda of human rights in relation to migration from Venezuela but also threw up challenges about how the policy could be used and how it was implemented. APEAs helped CCD identify these challenge areas and focus some needed attention on how to support migrants to make use of the new policy. The development of a tailored communications campaign to combat disinformation also helps illustrate this: insights from APEAs and information ecosystem analyses (IEAs) highlighted that relying on information and communication technologies (ICTs) (apparently the norm among many internationally supported initiatives to combat disinformation) was not sufficient, and that it was also essential to bring communities together in offline spaces, and this is the dual and more holistic approach CCD has sought to follow.
- The **Rapid Response Mechanism**, which was set up from the start as the most explicit instrument to enable CCD to act quickly and work flexibly [very high level of confidence]. This uses APEA in an ongoing and iterative manner (so ‘thinking politically’ as an ongoing lens) to monitor the municipalities in which CCD operates, to identify risks and windows of opportunity, and to shape the focus of the work supported through the mechanism (including in terms of defining issues of engagement and identifying partner organizations at the local level). It is worth noting that the same person leads APEAs and the Rapid Response Fund (RRF), which has helped ensure effective integration.
- APEAs have **informed the selection of both thematic and geographic areas that the project should work on** [high level of confidence]. For example, APEAs have helped:
 - » Elevate **human trafficking** as a major area of CCD engagement, after APEAs consistently highlighted the urgency and prevalence of this issue and the need to prioritize it;
 - » Incorporate a focus on **youth** more explicitly into CCD, based on the same kinds of findings emerging from APEAs that highlighted the particular vulnerability of young migrants coming from Venezuela to sexual abuse, exploitation, and trafficking (e.g. CCD work on keeping youth out of *inquilinos*, or housing provided for migrant populations, while parents or guardians are out working, and focusing instead on finding safe spaces for them to remain during the day);

- » Shape CCD's approach to combat disinformation and misinformation grounded in a sound understanding of the kind of access that people have to ICTs and whether and how they use them in their daily lives (linked to the point above as well);
 - » Select municipalities where there is **greater government and civil society capacity** (Santa Marta vs Cartagena);
 - » Inform the **RRF** on issues of focus and CSOs to support (as per the above as well).
- APEAs have helped **confirm assumptions and strategic decisions to date** [high level of confidence] – namely, the decision to work on the challenges related to migration beyond a short-term humanitarian approach and more fundamentally from a longer-term developmental one, requiring a more comprehensive, human rights-based response to migration that focuses on improving citizen security and social cohesion. However, testing of the overall strategy and assumptions has not been done as of yet.
 - APEA highlighted the need to know more about citizen security and social integration across settings and how these compare, and this led to **the development of a Citizen Security and Social Integration Index** [very high level of confidence]. The index operationalizes complex concepts such as social inclusion and governance and enables CCD to compare cities over time in terms of, for example, institutional capacity, trust in institutions, access to information, etc.

How have these project decisions contributed to achievements?

BOX 4: Summary of main CCD achievements to date

1. Putting **migration from Venezuela and human rights** at the center of the public policy agenda, and contributing to more consistent **incorporation of a migration lens** in national policies around human rights;
 2. Building the **capacity of local human rights organizations** and CSO human rights protection networks working with (and often led by) migrants from Venezuela;
 3. Fostering more **productive relationships** between these local CSOs and human rights protection networks on the one hand and local authorities on the other, including in terms of CSO participation in migration policy discussions at the local level.
- **Building of evidence**, which has contributed to Achievement 1 in particular (see Box 4), but also the other two [very high level of confidence]: Through APEAs and other forms of analysis, CCD has played a critical, and by some accounts even indispensable, role in **gathering data and producing and sharing research and evidence** on the migration and human rights landscape from Venezuela to Colombia. This function has been widely welcomed by different stakeholders, from authorities at the national and subnational levels, to organizations working with migrants from Venezuela at the local level, to USAID.
 - **Policy influence**, which has contributed to Achievement 1 in particular [high level of confidence] (see Box 4). APEAs have emphasized the need **to shift from a purely humanitarian approach** to the migration crisis from Venezuela **towards a longer-term human rights-based response** that focuses on improving citizen security and social cohesion. This analysis has helped inform the

Government of Colombia's **strategic approach** to the crisis, as well as its policies, so as to take migration and human rights more fully into account.

- **Empowerment of CSOs and mobilization and consolidation of CSO protection networks**, which is related to Achievements 1, 2 and 3 [high level of confidence] (see Box 4). For example, APEAs highlighted that migrant populations are especially vulnerable to sex trafficking, and this analysis led CCD to identify an organization called Putamente Poderosas, with which it now works. In addition, in the different municipalities where CCD is active, CSOs have been able to link up and work with the state through more productive advocacy engagement as a result of CCD support. An example of this is the role CCD played in connecting Renacer, a CSO that works on human trafficking, with state authorities at the local level in particular, on the basis that, over the years, Renacer has been able to pull together a vast amount of data on the sexual exploitation of young people in particular, and that this kind of information can be of tremendous value to the government in terms of being able to tackle the problem.





5. Expanding Access to Justice (EAJ), Somalia

5.1 Description of the project and main achievements to date



EAJ is a \$25 million, five-year project (2018–2023) implemented by Pact and ABA ROLI. It aims to contribute to lasting improvements to access to justice and effective mechanisms to address grievances in Somalia.

The project design was innovative as it drew on the lessons of decades of failed donor-funded formal justice sector reforms in Somalia. Instead of pursuing ‘supply-side’ interventions (i.e. state and judicial reforms), the design followed a ‘legal empowerment’ model: providing access to legal advice through community-based paralegals, an approach tried and tested over the past 20 years in Africa (and globally) but that had not yet been attempted in Somalia. Using community-based ‘justice promoters’ is more likely to improve access to justice as there is a greater degree of trust and it is based on the reality of ‘legal pluralism’ (the combination of the customary *xeer*, *sharia*, and state legal systems). These justice promoters are supported by local CSOs funded by the project, which can support the ‘demand side’: advising clients on how to best navigate the legally plural institutions in their local environment.

EAJ objectives were changed soon after the start of the project to cover:

Objective 1: improved inclusive community engagement in justice solutions.

Objective 2: strengthened justice services.

Objective 3: improved navigation of justice pathways by aggrieved parties.

In EAJ’s final years, research has become a cross-cutting activity. The three objectives focus on the core elements of justice ‘demand’ and ‘supply’, based on three key approaches:

1. **Court user committees** aim to establish community expectations and accountability for court operations. They also facilitate coordination between community leaders and representatives, statutory justice actors (such as the police, prosecutors, custodial services), legal aid organizations, and other district-based redress mechanisms.
2. **Model courts** aim to improve community confidence in court services, including through the development of court standards, policies, and technical practices to improve the operation, consistency, and effectiveness of state court adjudications.
3. **Justice promoters** are volunteers who support individuals in identifying their optimal pathway through the pluralistic justice environment, between *xeer* and *sharia* forums, state courts, and

peace committees. They address their clients' immediate justice needs and also enhance their understanding of justice services.

Given the operationally difficult Somalia context, beyond the justice promoters, our interviews identified relatively fewer **achievements** than the other two projects. The main ones were:

- The first program to support community-based **paralegals in Somalia**. This required contextualization of the approach in Somaliland and in different Somalia regions;
- Innovative research on **sharia law**, leading to some new interventions as part of an approach to protect individual rights (rather than customary law and associated group rights), which are more compliant with international human rights standards;
- An accountability platform to **resolve land disputes in Mogadishu**. In the absence of a land registry, powerful actors can usurp land and victims have little recourse. EAJ supported a land dispute committee to help solve local land disputes in Mogadishu.

EAJ was affected by a major change of USAID strategy in 2019 to include stabilization approaches in justice interventions and to expand into the newly liberated areas in Lower Shabelle. As a result of these revisions, the project launched into Benadir Regional Administration, South West State (mostly Baidoa), and accessible parts of Lower Shabelle, while continuing with a lighter footprint in Somaliland. The project also included more supply-side interventions with formal (state) justice partners than in the initial design.

EAJ implementation has also been affected by an almost complete turnover of the senior management team (with the exception of the research team leader), as well as (in common with the other two case studies), COVID-19 and the resulting need to operate entirely remotely.

5.2 How APEAs have been carried out

Baseline APEA

The initial APEA was undertaken in 2019 as part of a three-month inception phase, alongside other analyses (including a GESI analysis and strategy, also informed by a political economy perspective). The baseline APEA was produced by an international expert without a Somalia track record, and therefore lacked in-depth understanding. The EAJ team considered the justice sector-wide analysis did not offer new insights compared with existing justice sector APEAs, though it did serve as a useful stock-take for newcomers.

A new APEA was undertaken by the EAJ ABA ROLI research team leader and Pact DC staff. This resulted in a shorter and more action-oriented report. It assessed which constituencies mattered to decision-makers in a way that incentivized them to expand access to justice, including through community paralegals (instead of focusing only on spoilers who could block access to justice, such as government or judicial officials). This APEA laid the groundwork for future APEAs and research.

On demand research

EAJ's APEA is led by the ABA ROLI's research and learning team leader. Pact has provided some central support, such as helping define the scope of work of the first APEA and reviewing some initial studies.

But EAJ has not followed Pact's APEA methodology and has structured APEA inputs in a unique manner not found in the other HRSM projects we reviewed.

The EAJ approach to APEA and research combines:

- Everyday analysis of the operating environment;
- Issues-focused research relevant to the project or justice sector using an APEA lens;
- Integrating a political economy perspective into other EAJ research products.

Most everyday APEAs have been conducted by three Somali experts, who report to the research team leader and who draw on their different networks to respond to questions identified by the project. While they are part of EAJ, they have deliberately been kept siloed: they do not work together and are not involved in delivery. They are very well connected in their regions and are able to obtain information that may not be available to external experts or through a more formal APEA process. They provide analysis of ongoing developments (e.g. parliamentary and presidential election dynamics) and also investigate specific issues or potential partners, providing detailed information.

Findings are shared with EAJ staff on a 'need to know' basis by the research team leader to contribute to planning and delivering activities. This is managed closely, as misuse could have deadly consequences. Reports are produced in-house and not published. APEA insights are shared in quarterly reports to USAID only if they have influenced programming decisions.

More in-depth reports adopt an APEA lens to explore an issue relevant for EAJ. They are produced by consultants. Notable examples include the following.

- 2020 **Alternative Dispute Resolution** study made the case for not working on this issue in Somalia.
- 2020 **Pathways and Institutions for Resolving Land Disputes in Mogadishu** concluded that land disputes were the main justice issue but that none of the existing institutions had the capacity to resolve them. Solutions depended on who had power over which land issue in which area. The study informed the Mogadishu intervention, which this Learning Review did not research.
- 2020 **Sharia in Somalia** found that western aid organizations were reluctant to engage with sharia authorities and institutions, preferring formal or customary systems. Yet sharia is central to Somali culture and to the justice system, and the Constitution states that the justice system cannot contradict sharia. This research was valued by the donor community as it was an innovation, and also by Somali stakeholders, including women, who feel they can defend their rights better under sharia than through other legal channels.
- 2021 **Lower Shabelle** study provided advice on how to engage in this new region selected by USAID for EAJ. However, it did not influence programming, as it came too late. USAID then changed its regional priorities, and activities were terminated after a few months.
- 2022 **Contextual Analysis for Wadajir and Hudur Courts** was commissioned to provide advice on the establishment of model courts. As Hudur is surrounded by Al Shabaab forces, the research was undertaken indirectly, with a field researcher undertaking informal conversations. This was to manage security risks for the researcher and respondents. The report recommended not supporting the model courts in Hudur district as political economy factors associated with

rent-seeking made the formal system dysfunctional. Instead, it recommended targeting community initiatives.

5.3 How APEA has informed key decisions and contributed to achievements to date

How have APEAs influenced project decisions?

Despite high-quality analysis, valued not only by EAJ and USAID but also by the international development community, overall the project team is cautious about the extent of APEAs' influence over programming. This is in part because of the complexity of Somalia (including issues such as the clan system, regional differences, ongoing conflict, and difficulty of access), which make identifying project activities in response to the analysis challenging. In addition, the political and security priorities of the US Government, which is funding EAJ, are not always consistent with APEA findings (EAJ, 2022b). We nonetheless identified some examples of influence:

- **Introducing Somalia to new staff** [high level of confidence]. For EAJ and USAID staff with no track record of working in Somalia, EAJ research has proved invaluable, helping them understand the overall country context and some fundamental factors, such as the importance of customary norms and sharia law.
- **Understanding partners** [high level of confidence]. Given Somalia's complex social structures, its rapidly changing politics, and the challenges of accessing areas affected by violence, the ongoing APEA approach has enabled EAJ to gain detailed information on its partners. Somaliland has provided a counter example in the last years of the project; as a result of USAID deprioritizing Somaliland, and EAJ retaining few staff (including no Somaliland APEA expert), some interviews and documents suggest EAJ made a mistake working with the Ministry of Justice and not the Chief Justice. This undermined delivery in the last period of the project.
- **Identifying new initiatives** [low level of confidence]. The sharia study influenced some activities, such as (i) training community paralegals in sharia to help them navigate legal pluralism and (ii) production of an ethical booklet and training sharia judges, to enable Somalis to defend their individual rights as opposed to community rights through customary norms (as formal judges who may be poorly educated may use customary rather than sharia law to settle disputes).
- **Deciding which initiatives not to support** [low level of confidence]. On the basis of APEA, EAJ decided not to support some partners or activities, such as not funding bench books for the model courts, based on the Hudur study. However, it does not seem that EAJ fully followed APEA recommendations, as it did undertake some model court activities despite research findings. These activities followed a more traditional approach rather than drawing on APEA insights.
- **Managing fiduciary risks** [low level of confidence]. In addition to making activities more likely to succeed, analysis of incentives and sources of power can spot potential for misuse of funds as they become part of aid-funded 'patronage networks'.
- **Responding to USAID's strategic pivot** [low level of confidence]. USAID told EAJ the new regions in which it would operate; the choice was not based on an APEA and EAJ is reported to have shown some reluctance to pivot. Given the short window, EAJ staff had to rely on their own knowledge (to which past APEAs and research had contributed), rather than commissioning or undertaking

studies to select the best areas. This helped them identify which interventions were more likely to be feasible, staff risks, and existing relationships – but was a suboptimal process.

How have these project decisions contributed to achievements?

Box 5: Selected EAJ achievements to date

1. The first program to support community-based **paralegals in Somalia**. This required contextualization of the approach in Somaliland and in different Somalia regions;
2. Innovative research on **sharia law**, leading to some new interventions as part of an approach to protect individual rights (rather than customary law and associated group rights), which are more compliant with international human rights standards;
3. An accountability platform to **resolve land disputes in Mogadishu**. In the absence of a land registry, powerful actors can usurp land and victims have little recourse. EAJ supported a land dispute committee to help solve local land disputes in Mogadishu.

- **Choices not informed by APEAs appear to be associated with some poorer results** [low level of confidence]. Credible examples based on the US Government’s strategic decisions rather than EAJ analysis include (i) moving out of Somaliland (which had the best prospects for EAJ success as it was a more stable area) and (ii) moving into the more challenging South and South Central regions of Somalia, including Lower Shabelle, with little information, which has led to fewer achievements to date. EAJ could not influence these strategic decisions, which its analysis would have cautioned against.
- **Avoiding some activities and improving value for money** [low level of confidence]. A number of APEA-informed decisions were about what not to do, which means they cannot be linked to achievements. If these activities were replaced by more effective ones, the APEAs could have contributed to improved efficiency, with funding reallocated away from potentially poorly performing interventions.
- **Improving information within the donor community** [high level of confidence]. Evidence on how to improve access to justice in Somalia is scarce. The decision to maintain resources for APEAs and research products, and EAJ’s dissemination activities, has enhanced EAJ’s and USAID’s reputations and the quality of evidence for other donors, such as the UK Government and the United Nations.
- **Supporting justice promoters** [low level of confidence]. We cannot trace back to EAJ APEAs the overall strategic choice to address what interviewees perceived as the most important achievement: establishing Somalia’s first community-based paralegal ‘justice promoters’. This was a design decision, based on evidence of the importance of demand-side, people-centered access to justice initiatives in Somalia (and globally). The baseline APEA confirmed this was a sound design choice but we did not find evidence of how this was refined through APEAs on an ongoing basis (e.g. we did not see evidence of EAJ APEAs influencing how legal aid organizations supporting justice promoters were selected, funded, supported, or monitored).



6. Factors influencing the use and impact of APEA in HRSM Projects

6.1 How APEA have been used



The analysis above shows that, across all three of the case studies, APEAs have informed a range of decisions and thereby contributed towards project achievements to date. The APEAs we examined were used in decision-making to enable projects to:

- Set an **overall strategy and approach**. In Tanzania, APEAs were used to engage constructively with the government while navigating restrictions on CSOs. In Colombia, APEAs were used to provide evidence and inform a strategic approach to the crisis of migration focused on a longer-term human rights-based response rather than on shorter-term humanitarian concerns (Colombia, Tanzania);
- Support **evidence-based decision-making**. Overall, APEAs have been valued both within each project and among a wider set of in-country partners for generating data and evidence (all case studies);
- Corroborate – though as of this stage not yet test or amend – the projects’ overarching **theories of change** (all);
- Respond to **shifting security or political contexts** (all, from insecurity in Somalia to political opening in Tanzania);
- Identify **issues** that projects should work on (all);
- Identify **partners** to engage within civil society and/or government, especially at the local level (all);
- Select the **geographic focus** of interventions (Colombia, Tanzania);
- Manage risks, including **fiduciary, political, and security risks** (all);
- Decide what interventions **not to support** because they would not be politically feasible or would entrench patronage networks (Tanzania, Somalia);
- Inform **USAID strategy** (Colombia) and/or respond to USAID pivots (Tanzania before the USAID shift towards youth, Somalia after a USAID geographic shift);
- Inform the use of **rapid response mechanisms** where they are in place (Colombia, Tanzania).

6.2 Achievements influenced by APEAs

The case studies identified three types of achievements plausibly associated with APEAs.

1. Where APEAs were embedded within the overall project strategy and ways of working, they contributed to **improved project relevance and adaptability**. This was clearly the case in Tanzania,

where being able to operate as a human rights project from 2017 to 2021 was in itself an achievement and where DDA was able to adjust as the political context improved in the mainland and in Zanzibar after 2021. It was also evident in Colombia, where the landscape on migration from Venezuela has remained extremely fluid and where APEAs and other forms of analysis have enabled CCD to respond, adapt, and take advantage of windows of opportunity. For example, APEAs helped bring an explicit link between migration and human rights to policy debates and discussions in which it had heretofore remained absent.

2. We found that APEA-informed decisions **contributed to the achievement of some specific expected project results**, whether in terms of legal, regulatory, or policy change linked to civic space in Tanzania; the adoption of a human rights-based approach to migration policy in Colombia; or some justice training and service provision in Somalia. As this Learning Review is not an evaluation, we were not in a position to assess the importance of APEAs' contributions relative to other factors influencing relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, or sustainability. However, EAJ offers some counterfactual evidence: some interventions did not follow available APEA insights and were not effective.
3. APEAs (and in Colombia other forms of analysis as well) have helped **build the credibility of the three projects and foster strong relationships based on trust across stakeholders** (including government authorities and CSOs). In both Colombia and Tanzania, both CSO partners and on some issues the government came to trust CCD and DDA because of how data had been collected and used in advocacy. DDA Working Groups exemplify how projects that 'think and work politically' are able to foster reform coalitions. In Somalia, research produced by EAJ was particularly valued by other donors when it was shared.

6.3 Factors that influence the uptake of APEA findings

Drawing on the analysis in the preceding sections, this section draws out key factors that have influenced the use of APEAs to inform decision-making and to make a contribution to the achievements of the different projects to date.

MANAGEMENT COMMITMENT

- **Design of HRSM projects:** CCD, DDA, and EAJ all incorporate APEA in programming by design. HRSM committed not only to APEA in the inception phase but also on an ongoing basis. This provides a formal HRSM institutional foundation for APEA in each of the projects, giving Pact the space to provide advice and learn as the PROGRESS consortium APEA lead. (As noted in the methodology, our sample includes only projects that have used APEAs on an ongoing basis, but we see the inclusion of APEAs in their design as necessary if not sufficient for the uptake of APEA during project implementation.)
- **Ownership and buy-in for APEA across consortium partners:** Beyond a formal commitment or requirement to undertake APEA, the degree of buy-in from the project leadership (including the chief of party and relevant consortium partners) regarding APEA and the value they ascribe to it are also crucial. Our findings suggest this ownership and buy-in is uneven across the case studies.
 - » In Tanzania, there is strong commitment to APEA as part of the decision-making process. There also seems to be a high level of ownership and buy-in for APEA across the consortium

- in both Freedom House and Pact. Two Pact staff lead the APEA process but the entire DDA team is involved in undertaking the analysis and identifying implications for DDA.
- » The case of Colombia, on the other hand, has proven especially challenging on this front. It is clear that CCD leadership values APEA and uses it to make decisions and shape the substance of its work (e.g. the Rapid Response Mechanism and the Citizen Security and Social Integration Index). Yet the plethora of analytical tools and frameworks associated with different consortium partners has made it harder to discern the added value of APEA. It has also made it very difficult to involve non-Pact CCD members in undertaking APEAs in substantive and proactive ways. This may have led at least some of the partners to feel less vested in what APEAs find. More problematically, the proliferation of frameworks seems to have encouraged a proprietary and rigid approach to analysis within CCD. This can add layers of complication to the analysis, and lead to the duplication of efforts without necessarily generating different insights or knowledge or the overlooking of opportunities to build connections and synergies across tools and frameworks in an explicit and purposeful manner.
 - **Resourcing** (including in terms of personnel and time): All projects have at least one member of staff dedicated to APEA, which is essential to support the ambition embedded in HRSM programming to incorporate APEA in project management. However, as the case studies show, the level and/or quality of resourcing – both in-house and external support – varies. As noted above, in Colombia, CCD staff have expressed that the project does not have sufficient resources in-house to conduct APEAs, which can be quite intense, and they have had to rely on external consultants for additional support as a result. Resourcing needs may also change over time. In Tanzania, for example, consultants supported only the first APEA; subsequent APEAs have increasingly been undertaken with reduced Pact DC support.

TAILORING OF APEAS

- **Tailoring to project needs:** Beyond the inception phase and annual APEAs, each project incorporated APEA slightly differently in their decision-making, responding to how the project was managed and context-specific factors. For example, DDA in Tanzania also produced quarterly APEAs; CCD in Colombia used a range of analytical tools in addition to APEA; and EAJ in Somalia conducted political economy-informed research (such as on sharia law, land dispute management or in specific regions) and hired local political economy experts who provided on demand advice.
- **Contextual factors:** CCD, DDA, and EAJ have been implemented in country and/or regional contexts that are widely different. In Somalia, there is ongoing violence and political instability. Tanzania experienced political repression between 2015 and 2021 that may now be easing. Colombia has been characterized by a context of migration from Venezuela that is fluid and fast-moving, and where there has been little information and knowledge on what has been happening. In each case, the context has shaped the way APEAs have been undertaken and socialized, and project teams have approached APEA processes in ways that they have felt are suitable to conditions on the ground. EAJ, for instance, decided to share APEA findings on a need-to-know basis, because of what it perceived to be APEA-related security risks in Somalia. By contrast, APEAs in Tanzania are a DDA team-wide endeavor (though sources of information remain confidential to protect interviewees at risk of repression). In Colombia, findings from APEAs have been shared more broadly beyond CCD itself.

USE OF APEAS

- **Use and focus of APEAs:** The three case studies show that more regular and/or lighter touch APEAs made it possible to identify changes in context, opportunities and constraints on a more regular basis, and to inform decision-making accordingly. The Rapid Response Mechanisms in both Colombia and Tanzania are good examples. In addition, while broad, some baseline APEAs were especially useful at the start of a project to provide essential context and information to staff and partners (e.g. Colombia, Somalia), and to validate an overall approach (e.g. Tanzania, Somalia), deeper and more fine-grained APEAs focused on specific issues have proven very important to inform specific decision-making processes (e.g. on locality or partners to engage with, or thematic issues to prioritize).
- **Quality and accessibility of the analysis:** We could find evidence of uptake when APEAs were perceived as adding new insights because of their quality (e.g. rigor of research). For example, the second EAJ baseline APEA provided more evidence on EAJ's main approach than the first one it replaced, and EAJ's sharia research was seen as unique for Somalia. The use of local staff or consultants, as in Colombia for example, also contributed to quality. Such staff had a more nuanced understanding of their contexts, while international staff and consultants could contribute APEA expertise and facilitation. DDA in Tanzania has produced shorter APEA reports and quarterly updates that have been timely and accessible to staff and USAID. CCD in Colombia has provided APEA in visually accessible ways that partners and relevant stakeholders have appreciated. At times, there has been a trade-off between research quality and accessibility of findings, which projects have managed differently.

APEA AS A MINDSET

The case studies show that APEAs are more than reports. They are a mindset through which contexts are analyzed, options are discussed and selected, and relationships with stakeholders managed on an ongoing basis to foster coalitions for change.

- **APEA skills and mindset:** Pact has played an important role in seeking to nurture and sharpen APEA skills across each of the projects, including in terms of guidance, tools, training, outsourced support, and participation in and/or facilitation of PEAs. However, as the case of Colombia helps illustrate, this has not always proven sufficient to internalize APEA as a lens and a mindset. A challenge that CCD has confronted is that the different analytical frameworks that different consortium partners lead on may have become reified and unnecessarily rigid. There has been a lack of awareness or clarity shared across consortium partners on what APEA as an approach (rather than simply a deliverable) is and what kinds of questions it seeks to address from a substantive perspective to enable building synergies across frameworks of analysis. By contrast, in Tanzania, DDA demonstrates an internalized TWP mindset that goes beyond APEAs, starting from the Tanzanian chief of party, who both values evidence and is able to network across CSOs and government.
- **Team culture:** APEA uptake seems to benefit from an open team culture, whereby findings can be shared internally, diverse views heard, and project lessons internalized. A more hierarchical or fragmented team culture seems to lead to APEA processes that are less inclusive and participatory

and/or that can undermine the extent to which insights from APEAs are used to inform decisions on a regular basis. DDA in Tanzania appears to have a particularly open working culture, despite a repressive political context in which team members have had to be cautious in order not to put CSO partners at risk of arrest or harassment. In Somalia, on the other hand, EAJ has not shared APEA insights internally very widely. This has been a choice based on the internal political economy of the project team associated with Somalia's divided society and ongoing violence, which could put staff and partners at severe risk, including for their lives. However, it should be noted that other justice and conflict resolution projects in Somalia that use APEAs have taken a different approach and discuss emerging issues within their teams more openly, and have also shared findings externally on a selective basis. The trade-off between APEA influence over decision-making and control of information is therefore not solely an issue driven by context but also a management decision.

- **Use and focus of APEAs:** The three case studies show that more regular and/or lighter-touch APEAs make it possible to identify changes in context, opportunities, and constraints on a more regular basis, and to inform decision-making accordingly. The rapid response mechanisms in Colombia and Tanzania are good examples. In addition, while broad, baseline APEA can be especially useful at the start of a project to provide essential context and information to staff and partners (e.g. Colombia, Somalia), and to validate an overall approach (e.g. Tanzania, Somalia), deeper and more fine-grained APEAs focused on specific issues have proven very important to inform specific decision-making processes (e.g. on locality or partners to engage with, or thematic issues to prioritize).

USAID'S ROLE AND WAYS OF WORKING

USAID itself exerts considerable influence on the extent to which APEA can be used to inform project decisions and how deep that process can go.

- **Strategic priorities:** When USAID strategic priorities have changed, this has required a readjustment on grounds that may have little to do with APEA insights, in terms of, for example which themes or localities to focus on. This has not affected CCD in Colombia but has been the case in both Tanzania and Somalia. In the case of EAJ, US geopolitical interests shifted, which led to a change in EAJ's regional focus to support stabilization objectives in Somalia. EAJ had no time to assess the feasibility of interventions through an APEA in the new regions before it began. This led to fewer project achievements than if EAJ had remained more engaged in Somaliland.
- **Flexibility:** In addition, all three case studies show that, despite the fact that, on paper and at the policy level, USAID is committed to thinking and working politically, and Collaboration, Learning and Adaptation principles, this does not always come out in practice. We found that USAID provided limited flexibility and space for its implementing partners to test, experiment, and take risks. As the three case studies highlight, radical shifts in strategy that would require fundamental rethinking of a project's theory of change remain extremely challenging from a bureaucratic perspective. Recognizing this limitation, USAID has tried to enable some flexibility through modalities such as rapid response mechanisms (in the case of CCD and DDA). It has also sought to define project objectives broadly enough that projects can pivot activities or decide what to focus on as long as such choices can be justified (including on the basis of evidence from APEAs and other forms of analysis).



7. Lessons and considerations for greater APEA uptake and impact

7.1 Lessons for other projects



Based on the case studies, we have identified some lessons that could be considered by other HRSM projects, or more generally by projects that seek to think and work politically through the use of APEAs. Some of these reflect messages that have emerged more broadly from other reviews and evaluations of TWP programs.

1. APEA embedded in project cycle management systems on an ongoing basis can inform decisions more explicitly and thereby contribute to project achievements. But as the three projects we looked at help to illustrate, there is no set way to do this.
2. Staff mindsets and soft skills matter for APEA/TWP and its uptake (and not just technical expertise). This is especially the case at the leadership level. APEAs cannot influence decision-making if project leaders or USAID prefer to start from what they perceive to be technically sound, rather than also consider what is politically feasible.
3. Dedicated leadership and staff time for APEA can ensure this lens actually influences decisions. This can include time to identify questions and develop ToRs, to carry out research, to undertake the analysis as a team, to share findings with USAID and other stakeholders, or to oversee rapid response mechanisms to respond to new insights derived from APEAs.
4. APEAs that are conducted on a more regular basis can enable projects to adapt more readily in response to changes in contextual realities. They are more likely to be not only 'thinking' but also 'working politically' on an ongoing basis. However, the frequency of the analysis will depend on the needs of the team and its capacity to undertake and use it.
5. APEAs that are focused on a specific issue or problem can lead to greater uptake. This was also a lesson from the Pact 2019 learning review. When APEAs examine well defined issues on which the project wants to intervene or which block progress towards its objectives, they are more likely to have operationally relevant findings. Broader contextual APEAs can add value as an induction or a foundation for knowledge.
6. It is important to ensure that APEAs are conducted and information is collected in ways that are context- and conflict-sensitive. This will reduce the risks associated with the APEA process itself, which can be sensitive and could undermine the wider project if mishandled.

7. However, a working culture that values the sharing of information and discussion of findings and analysis within the team is also crucial for APEA uptake in decision-making. Confidential APEAs may not influence team decisions to the same extent, and this is a trade-off that teams need to consider.
8. Involvement of USAID staff in APEA processes is important for buy-in and uptake. This is both because it can lead to a shared vision for the overall strategy across USAID and project leadership and staff, but also because USAID is a position to decide on the resourcing for APEAs and their applicability.
9. The political economy of USAID (and the US Government) also matters because the agency has considerable influence on the extent to which APEA can inform the design, focus and implementation of a given project. In some contexts, the US Government may be less willing to incorporate or act on APEA-based considerations which are not consistent with its internal policy priorities.

7.2 Considerations for HRSM management

Below are some considerations that are worth HRSM management (across the consortium or for each award) taking into account when thinking about the use of APEA and the potential impact it can have on HRSM activities. How these considerations are integrated will depend on the particularities of each project and the context within which it operates.

1. Foster a common understanding across consortium partners and staff about what APEA means for each project. Ongoing central support on APEA is highly valued but may not be sufficient on its own for this shared vision at a project level.
2. Ensure project leadership has a politically informed mindset and political skills. This can be a recruitment consideration, or a focus of professional development.
3. Provide adequate resourcing for projects to undertake and use APEAs. This includes recruiting dedicated staff with responsibility for APEA, as well as enough staff time across the project team to be involved in and use APEAs.
4. Find culturally and conflict-sensitive ways to encourage participation around APEAs in different country settings. The trade-off between risks and participation needs to be considered on a case-by-case basis.
5. Encourage a more harmonized approach to analysis. HRSM awards can combine frameworks and approaches, with a political economy lens integrated as needed in other tools. This will reduce competition between frameworks and tools from different PROGRESS consortium organizations.
6. Use HRSM evidence to advocate for USAID to work in ways that enable uptake of APEA and Collaboration, Learning and Adaptation, not only on paper but also in actual practice.
7. Encourage Pact and other consortium partners to push for flexibility in the way they themselves work, testing constraining USAID rules rather than assuming these cannot be overcome. This could include an APEA of the US Government in the partner country, to understand pressures on USAID itself and when USAID flexibility is politically feasible or not.



Annexes

ANNEX 1 INTERVIEWS

Pact DC

Mason Ingram, Vice President of Governance, Pact

Kate Byom, Deputy Director of Governance, Pact

Colombia

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Pablo León, Freedom House

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Victoria Dangond Peralta, Internews

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Alysson Oakley, Vice President, Learning, Evidence, and Impact, Pact

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Michael Gallagher, Program Officer, HRSM, Freedom House

Lira Djumadylova, Technical Director, HRSM, Freedom House

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