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ANALYTICAL SUPPORT SERVICES AND EVALUATIONS FOR SUSTAINABLE SYSTEMS (ASSESS) PARTICIPATING AGENCY SERVICE AGREEMENT

FINAL REPORT

(March 12, 2014–December 13, 2023)

Award Number: 624-P-14-00004

USAID Cognizant Technical Office: West Africa Regional Economic Growth Office

ANALYTICAL SUPPORT SERVICES AND EVALUATIONS FOR SUSTAINABLE SYSTEMS (ASSESS) PARTICIPATING AGENCY SERVICE AGREEMENT: Final Report

Activity Start Date and End Date: March 12, 2014–December 13, 2023

Figure 1. Operational Coverage of United States Agency for International Development/West Africa

Source: ASSESS. 2015. ASSESS Participating Agency Service Agreement. Accra, Ghana: ASSESS for United States Agency for International Development/West Africa Regional Economic Growth Office.

Text Box 1. Key Achievements of the ASSESS PASA (FY 2014–FY 2024)

Covering 12 (Benin, Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Cote d'Ivoire, the Gambia, Ghana, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone, and Togo) of the 21 countries within the scope of the United States Agency for International Development/West Africa (USAID/WA) Regional Mission, the ASSESS PASA:

       Executed 29 evaluations and studies;

       Executed 47 collaborative events, including learning events and regional roundtables;

       Produced 71 editions of the USAID/WA Regional Economic Growth Office (REGO) newsletter reaching 2,000 recipients by FY 2024;

       Developed modules and delivered four USAID implementing partner (IP) training workshops in monitoring, evaluation, and learning, and communication;

       Provided 28 short- and long-term technical assistance experts for USAID/WA REGO teams, IPs, and major regional partners;

       Timely delivered COVID-19 response funding and support totaling more than $1.3 million to USAID/WA REGO Trade Team IPs;

       Translated 130 communication products; and

       Identified and managed 133 consultants.

Source: Chapters 2–6 of this report.

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Acronym List

ACE	Africa Centre of Excellence
AfriCap	African Water Association Capacity Building
AGOA	African Growth and Opportunity Act
AI	Artificial Intelligence
AMELP	Activity Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning Plan
AOR	Agreement Officer's Representative
ASA	American Soybean Association
ASSESS	Analytical Support Services and Evaluations for Sustainable Systems
ATI	Africa Trade and Investment
BHA	Bureau of Humanitarian Assistance
BPA	Blanket Purchase Agreement
CA	Commissioned Activity
CDCS	Country Development Cooperation Strategy
CILSS	Permanent Interstate Committee for Drought Control in the Sahel
CIMMYT	International Maize and Wheat Improvement Center
CLA	Collaborating, Learning, and Adapting
CLOSA	Connect and Learn for Sustainable Associations
COR	Contracting Officer's Representative
CORAF	*Conseil Ouest et Centre Africain pour la Recherche et le Développement Agricoles*
DEC	Development Experience Clearinghouse
DIS	Development Information Solution
DOC	Development Outreach Communications
DSU	Delaware State University
DTRT	Dignity Do the Right Thing
DQA	Data Quality Assessment
EAA	Ethical Apparel Africa
ECOWAP	Economic Community of West African States Agriculture Policy
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
ECREEE	ECOWAS Centre for Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency
EnGRAIS	Enhancing Growth through Regional Agricultural Input Systems
ENSEA	*Ecole Nationale Supérieure de Statistique et d'Economie Appliquée*
ERERA	ECOWAS Regional Electricity Regulatory Authority
FAS	Foreign Agricultural Service
FAW	Fall Armyworm
FFPr	Food for Progress
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
FtF	Feed the Future
FY	Fiscal Year
G2G	Government to Government
GAME-GDA	Ghana Apparel Manufacturing Expansion Global Development Alliance
GFSS	Global Food Security Strategy
GPP	Ghana Poultry Project
HSDF	Health Strategy and Delivery Foundation
IFDC	International Fertilizer Development Center
IITA	Institute of Tropical Agriculture
INTED	Institute of Teacher Education and Development
IP	Implementing Partner

IPM	Integrated Pest Management
IR	Intermediate Result
J2SR	Journey to Self-Reliance
J2Su	Journey Towards Sustainability
KNUST	Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology
KNUST-BIRD	KNUST Bureau of Integrated Rural Development
KPI	Key Performance Indicator
LCPS	Low-Cost Private Schools
LCS	Local Capacity Strengthening
LEM	Learning and Events Manager
LOA	Life of Activity
LOP	Life of Project
LULC	Land Use Land Cover
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MBOT	Membership-Based Organizational Transformation
MEL	Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
NASA	National Aeronautics and Space Administration
NGO	Nongovernmental Organization
NOFO	Notice of Funding Opportunity
NPPO	National Plant Protection Office
PAIRED	Partnership for Agricultural Research, Education and Development
PAJE-NIETA	*Projet d'Appui aux Jeunes Entrepreneurs*
PASA	Participating Agency Service Agreement
PATRP	Power Africa Transactions and Reforms Program
PITT	Performance Indicator Tracking Table
POC	Point of Contact
PPP	Public–Private Partnership
PPR	Performance Plan and Report
PREPARE	President's Emergency Plan for Adaptation and Resilience
RAM	Responsibility Assignment Matrix
RDCS	Regional Development Cooperative Strategy
RDO	Regional Development Objective
REG	Regional Economic Growth
REGO	Regional Economic Growth Office
RHO	Regional Health Office
RPGO	Regional Peace and Governance Office
RPO	Regional Program Office
SRO	USAID/Senegal/Sahel Regional Office
SOPs	Standard Operating Procedures
SOW	Scope of Work
SSA	Sub-Saharan Africa
SSD	Sanitation Service Delivery
TA	Technical assistance
TBI	Tony Blair Institute
TBT	Technical Barriers to Trade
TNA	Training Needs Assessment
TOC	Theory of Change
UEMOA	*Union Economique et Monétaire Ouest Africaine*
UFHB	*Université Félix Houphouët-Boigny*

URI	University of Rhode Island
URI-CRC	University of Rhode Island Coastal Resources Center
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
USAID/WA	USAID/West Africa
USDA	United States Department of Agriculture
USDA/FAS	United States Department of Agriculture, Foreign Agricultural Service
USDA/FAS/OCBD	United States Department of Agriculture, Foreign Agricultural Service, Office of Capacity Building and Development
USG	United States Government
USGS	United States Geological Survey
WA	West Africa
WA-BiCC	West Africa Biodiversity and Climate Change
WABiLED	West Africa Biodiversity and Low Emissions Development
WAEP	West Africa Energy Program
WAFP	West Africa Fertilizer Program
WAHO	West African Health Organization
WANEP	West Africa Network for Peacebuilding
WASH	Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene
WATIH	West Africa Trade and Investment Hub
WECARD	West and Central African Council for Agricultural Research and Development
WTO	World Trade Organization

Executive Summary

Purpose

The purpose of this report is to assess and document the extent to which the goal, intermediate result (IR), and sub-IRs of the United States Agency for International Development/West Africa (USAID/WA) Analytical Support Services and Evaluations for Sustainable Systems (ASSESS) Participating Agency Service Agreement (PASA) have been achieved and how the implementation of the PASA's interventions contributed to achieving USAID/WA's Regional Development Objective 2 (RDO 2) of "inclusive broad-based economic growth" through "improved evidence-based decision-making, program planning, resource allocation and policy advocacy." The final report is expected to provide USAID, its implementing partners (IPs), and stakeholders with data on outcomes, best practices, and lessons learned to inform future programming by USAID and the United States Department of Agriculture, Foreign Agricultural Service (USDA/FAS) in West Africa.

To streamline the report writing process, USDA/FAS asked the team to focus on three questions[1]:
- Question 1: To what extent has the ASSESS PASA achieved its purpose and goals, IR, and sub-IRs?
- Question 2: To what extent has the ASSESS PASA addressed capacity needs of the USAID/WA Regional Economic Growth Office (REGO) and USAID-funded activities that interacted with ASSESS?
- Question 3: What unintended contribution has the ASSESS PASA's approach and activities achieved relative to indirectly supporting USAID's localization agenda, which was announced during the last two years of the project?

Background

In its 2015–2020 Regional Development Cooperation Strategy (RDCS), USAID/WA committed itself to supporting "broad-based economic growth and resilience" (RDO 2). The 2020–2025 USAID/WA RDCS had a similar development objective to support "inclusive broad-based economic growth" (RDO 2). In both RDCS documents, USAID/WA emphasizes "evidence-based decision-making," including for "policy, programming and resource allocation," as a cross-cutting theme for achieving the development objectives. The ASSESS PASA was designed and executed by USDA/FAS as a mechanism for helping USAID/WA REGO provide this type of cross-cutting support to its new and existing programs. The PASA was designed to achieve one IR and four sub-IRs:
- **IR:** Body of knowledge and evidence for improved resource allocation, policy advocacy, and program planning increased:
  - Sub-IR 1: Recommendations from evaluations and studies operationalized;
  - Sub IR 2: Availability of information for decision making increased;
  - Sub-IR 3: Performance data collection and reporting improved; and
  - Sub-IR 4: Requested support provided to enhance USAID's performance.

Design and Approach

USDA does not require any project that is executed with a PASA to develop an activity monitoring, evaluation, and learning (MEL) plan, or to conduct a mid-term or final project evaluation. The ASSESS

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[1] Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, Bureau of Integrated Rural Development (KNUST-BIRD). 2023. Close-Out Reporting Contract Agreement for the ASSESS PASA. Accra, Ghana: KNUST-BIRD for ASSESS and USAID/West Africa Regional Economic Growth and Development Office (USAID/WA REGO). Pg. 3.

PASA did, however, develop an MEL Plan that was revised over the life of activity (LOA[2]). For this reason, the final report relies heavily on the indicators that are tracked in the PASA's performance indicator tracking table (PITT) (Annex I) as well as the PASA's quarterly and semi-annual reports. This information was supplemented by data from:

- Two surveys conducted by ASSESS in FY 2021 and FY 2023 that obtained the feedback from agreement officer's representatives (AORs) and contracting officer's representatives (CORs) that was needed to measure the PASA's two outcome indicators: 1) Outcome Indicator 1: "Percentage of USAID designs that are informed by ASSESS evaluations and studies"; and 2) Outcome Indicator 1.1: "Percentage of approved evaluation reports for which actions have been taken or implemented" (Annex I);
- The final reports on the ASSESS-facilitated learning events,[3] most of which were based on a survey of all or a representative sample of the people who attended each of these events; and
- Five draft technical briefs that ASSESS co-developed with their local partners (in FY 2024) and were designed to highlight some of the short- and longer-term impacts, in relation to the project's IR and sub-IRs. The draft technical briefs also include an initial analysis of some of the key lessons and best practices from the project for USAID's future MEL platforms (see Annex VIII).

This information was supplemented by having six of the key ASSESS staff involved in a highly participatory final report writing process.

Findings, Best Practices, and Lessons Learned

Question 1: To what extent has the ASSESS PASA achieved its purpose and goals, IR, and sub-IRs?

<u>IR: Body of Knowledge and Evidence for Improved Resource Allocation, Policy Advocacy, and Program Planning Increased</u>

There is clear evidence from the ASSESS semi-annual and quarterly reports that the ASSESS-supported activities:

- Increased the body of knowledge and evidence by supporting USAID/WA REGO to design and execute: 1) high-quality evaluations and studies that met USAID's quality standards (Sub-IR 1); 2) in-person, virtual, and hybrid (both in-person and virtual) learning events, and MEL and communication training workshops (Sub-IRs 2 and 3); and 3) short-term and longer-term technical support to strengthen the USAID/WA REGO teams and core office (Sub-IR 4); and that this
- Increased body of knowledge and evidence has enabled ASSESS to achieve its overall objectives, which were to: 1) "enable USAID/WA to learn more systematically from its [Regional Economic Growth] REG interventions; 2) anchor its programs more firmly with local organizations; and 3) document the effectiveness of its REG programs more rigorously and credibly."[4] Four of the best indicators of this successful impact on USAID's programming are:
  - The ASSESS 2023 post-evaluation/assessment survey data showing that 32 percent[5] of the new project designs (between FY 2014 and FY 2023) were informed by the results of ASSESS activities (Outcome Indicator 1, Annex I and Annex IV);

- The fact that the PASA strongly achieved one of USAID's 14 good practices for its new localization indicator, "Locally Led Programs"—good practice number eight: "non-local recipients demonstrate good faith efforts to maximize sub-awards to local organizations"[6] (Annex II.E.2);
- The agency's heavy reliance on consultants (133 total)—most of which were based in West Africa—to execute its commissioned activities (CAs); and
- The fact that 92 percent of evaluations, 100 percent of assessments (Sub-IR 1), and 100 percent of the event reports (Sub-IR 1 and Sub-IR 2) were approved by USAID.

Sub-IR 1: Recommendations From Evaluations and Studies Operationalized

Findings

Between FY 2014 and FY 2024, ASSESS executed 29 evaluations and studies, 23 (79 percent) of which were for USAID/WA REGO and six (21 percent) of which were implemented as buy-ins for USAID bilateral missions (i.e., USAID/Ghana, USAID/Côte d'Ivoire, USAID/Nigeria, USAID/Mali, and other United States Government (USG) offices, including USAID/Africa Bureau (AFR), USDA, and Peace Corps, Benin).

Three of the best indicators of the successful execution of this mandate are that:
- All but one of the 13 multi-country evaluations were approved by USAID (92 percent of target);
- All 12 of the approved evaluations (100 percent of target) were posted on the USAID Development Experience Clearinghouse (DEC) in accordance with ADS 201.3.5.18; and
- The results of the final survey conducted among AORs and CORs suggested that 92 percent of the ASSESS-managed USAID/WA REGO and bilateral buy-in evaluations and studies resulted in follow-up actions being taken by USAID.

Best Practices

Based on this analysis, the team identified seven examples of best practices that could be emulated or replicated by other USAID-funded projects when funding similar activities:
1. Develop a comprehensive CA (evaluation) manual outlining standardized technical procedures and templates to guide the conduct of evaluations and ensure consistency and precision.
2. Collaborate closely with USAID teams and develop a clear Scope of Work (SOW) for the commissioned evaluation or study in order to have a shared understanding of the CA, expected deliverables, timelines, and budget to align evaluation efforts with agency goals.
3. Ensure that each SOW incorporates sufficient time for the review of deliverables into the project timeline and that any expansion of the scope includes a formal (e.g., approved by the project/PASA and by USAID) extension of timelines to maintain the quality of evaluations.
4. Recruit a team of highly qualified experts with robust writing skills that includes a strong subject matter expert to enhance the quality and depth of the evaluation.
5. Provide rigorous orientation and technical backstopping to the consultant that is hired to lead an evaluation, assessment, or special study that includes: a) assisting them in adapting and using standard surveys, interviews, and forms; b) participating in the field studies, interviews, and focus group discussions; c) thorough verification of the major findings; and d) facilitating the writing and editing of reports.

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[6] USAID. 2024. Measuring Programs on Localization. USAID Performance Indicator Reference Sheet. Indicator name: Locally Led Programs. Good practice number eight (out of 14 good practices identified in the Performance Indicator Reference Sheet for the Locally Led Programs Indicator). Washington, D.C.: USAID. https://www.usaid.gov/localization/measurement or https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/2023-07/Public%20Copy%20of%20Locally%20Led%20Programs%20PIRS_1.pdf.

6. Require all evaluations and studies to go through a three-stage review process that involves:
    -   *Stage 1:* An initial review by the Technical Team and principal investigators;
    -   *Stage 2:* A compliance check with USAID's standard quality checklists including: a) "Criteria to Ensure the Quality of Evaluation Report" (ADS 201.3.5.17), b) the Evaluation Report Compliance Checklist, and c) the Evaluation Report Review Template; and
    -   *Stage 3:* Copy editing conducted by the program's communication and knowledge management specialist, supplemented by an external copy editor.
7. Employ various feedback mechanisms such as mini-surveys, feedback forms, in-brief and out-brief sessions, and key informant interviews with activity points of contact and/or requesting offices to develop an iterative feedback process that contributes to ongoing quality enhancement.
8. Work with faculty associated with a program's university partner/s to identify qualified students to conduct more detailed, long-term studies that can be incorporated into their PhD dissertations and add value for USAID and its partners.

Lessons Learned

1. Balance trade-offs between learning and innovation to ensure that the evaluation process is dynamic, allowing for continuous learning while fostering innovation in evaluation methodologies and approaches.
2. Invest adequate time and resources in the pre-implementation phase of the evaluation and studies work plans.
3. Recognize the significance of team dynamics and provide opportunities for team harmonization in order to foster collaboration, enhance communication, and ensure that the evaluation team operates cohesively toward common objectives.
4. Appoint an experienced evaluation or project management expert from the MEL platform to manage the evaluation team. Ensure that the MEL platform management expert participates in the expert teams' initial working sessions.
5. Implement mechanisms to enhance the detection of early-warning signals of poor report quality and delays in submission in order to identify actionable recommendations that might need USAID approval such as extending the original timelines.
6. Ensure that all reports undergo a thorough review by the MEL project platform staff, and a compliance check as well as rigorous editing and formatting to refine the presentation of results before submission to USAID.
7. Institutionalize a stakeholder engagement process through a PhD review committee at the project's local university core partner involving USAID staff. This committee could play an advisory role for ongoing and future PhD research (similar to how the Trade Team participated in the review of the COVID-19 PhD applied research). The aim of this committee is to formally engage USAID and industry partners with the local university partner right from the conceptualization stage of PhD research studies so that they are designed to address the key knowledge gaps faced by the sectors.

<u>Sub-IR 2: Availability of Information for Decision Making Increased</u>

Findings

- Between FY 2014 and FY 2023, ASSESS executed 47[7] (100 percent of the annual approved targets) in-person, virtual, or hybrid collaborative learning events, almost all of which were ranked very positively in the final event reports; and
- Pilot tested a new model for a regional USAID/WA newsletter in FY 2017 that was then scaled up to over 2,000 USAID staff across the agency, IPs, and ambassadors across West Africa by the last edition in FY 2024.

Best Practices (For Event Management Only)

1. Anticipate the need for planning meetings and simulations both prior to and during events (both virtual and in-person) to give the project team an opportunity to explore and share ideas on how to implement the workshop sessions.
2. Develop a standard list of checklists, templates, and forms to allow better tracking of planning processes and management of the many risks that are associated with in-person, virtual, and hybrid (in-person and virtual) training. Three examples of best practice from ASSESS include:
   – The event determination checklist for determining if an event can be successfully carried out within a given time frame and the conditions that must be met to guarantee quality deliverables;
   – A Responsibility Assignment Matrix (RAM) for all events to ensure a complete breakdown of all tasks related to events and for tracking progress over the implementation timeline; and
   – Develop a training guide for virtual workshops to help staff better understand how to plan and execute a virtual training workshop and/or build a backup plan for shifting the execution of a workshop from in-person to virtual if this is needed.
3. *Consultants:*
   – Use experienced consultants and facilitators to facilitate interactive and engaging workshop events to ensure that new trends and global best practices are integrated during pre-planning and introduced to participants during the execution of events; and
   – Develop a flexible and responsive approach to identifying, mobilizing, onboarding, and managing these consultants recruited to facilitate the regional events.
4. *Interactive and Engaging Virtual Workshops:*
   – Prioritize interactive and engaging delivery to keep virtual events as close to in-person as possible; and
   – Consider: a) using parking lots to collate questions and comments for facilitators' attention post-event; b) providing a channel to address participants' questions and concerns; and c) organizing icebreakers to prevent participant fatigue and apathy during long sessions.
5. Develop engaging agendas that encourage the participation of all participants to share views and experiences for better planning and program outcomes.
6. Make translation services available for mixed audiences, both for pre-event planning and during events.
7. *Monitoring and Evaluation*:
   – Ensure that each event has a system for processing participant feedback both during and after the event; and

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[7] 1) 19 regional and national learning events; 2) three brown-bag meetings; 3) seven regional conferences and roundtables; 4) four co-creation events; 5) eight training workshops in communication, monitoring, evaluation, and learning for USAID/WA REGO IPs across the region; and 6) six USAID/WA REGO team retreats.

       –   Conduct a rigorous post-event evaluation (following a standard template) that critiques the event design and execution as a basis for improving future events.

Lessons Learned

1. Well-planned in-person, virtual, and hybrid (i.e., combination of in-person and virtual) events are an effective, low-cost mechanism for disseminating information to stakeholders and involving them in joint decision making with USAID's regional offices.
2. Given the complexity and geographical dispersion of the USAID offices, regional partners, and IPs involved in USAID's current and projected events, it is important for USAID to have a standard set of planning tools, protocols, and guides for in-person and virtual event design, execution, and post-event evaluation.
3. Having a well thought-out strategy for identifying, onboarding, and supervising qualified local consultants improves event quality, efficiency, and programmatic outcomes.
4. All stakeholders must be involved in the development of the learning event and regional roundtable agendas to facilitate adoption of the lessons that emanate from these meeting platforms.

Sub-IR 3: Performance Data Collection and Reporting Improved

Findings

There is clear evidence from the ASSESS semi-annual and quarterly reports and from the post-evaluation training reports for the four virtual MEL workshops that the ASSESS PASA achieved all of the revised targets for its activities under this sub-IR, which included:
- Enabling USAID/WA to monitor the impact of its routine support and COVID-19 mitigation support on a small sub-sample (three) of its private sector IPs;
- Providing routine backup support (through the ASSESS core staff and consultants) to the USAID/WA REGO Program Analytics Unit that ensured the quality and accuracy of its regional monitoring and evaluation (M&E) data; and
- Developing a series of training modules that were based on a rigorous assessment of IP needs that were pilot tested in four virtual IP training workshops in FY 2023.

Best Practices

Three examples of best practice that could be scaled up to other programs include:
1. *Capacity Strengthening Approach:*
   - Share all the required tools and templates to guide reporting with the targeted IPs;
   - Conduct a Training Needs Assessment (TNA) for each IP to help tailor training and mentoring to the needs of the IPs;
   - Use virtual MEL workshops to overcome the logistic challenges and cost of offering continuous capacity strengthening;
   - Develop a virtual M&E training workshop guide for the MEL mechanism staff to ensure that the training modules respond to the needs identified in the stakeholder TNA; and
   - Collaborate with the IPs in the preparation and review of their quarterly report and key performance indicators to ensure that the reports align with USAID's requirements and ensure that any feedback from USAID is integrated effectively.
2. Anticipate the need to adapt programming to unforeseen shifts in guidance and the macro-environment of the MEL mechanisms in order to remain relevant.

Lessons Learned

1. A well-planned virtual MEL training program offers a low-cost, effective alternative to in-person training for IP staff and USAID-supported regional partners.
2. To be effective on a regional scale with multiple audiences, these MEL trainings should be guided by:
   – An initial TNA; and
   – A standard planning process (outlined in a training guide) for: a) the design, production, and review of the training modules; b) presenting the modules; and c) facilitating stakeholder feedback, both during and after the event.
3. Care must also be taken to ensure that all of the training tools, templates, and guides are rooted in ADS requirements and approved USAID MEL protocols.
4. MEL platforms should be adaptable to changes in reporting mechanisms and technology to ensure continued effectiveness.
5. Setting clear targets for training activities helps measure the impact and success of capacity building initiatives.

Sub-IR 4: Requested Support Provided to Enhance USAID's Performance

Findings

Between FY 2014 and FY 2023 the PASA enhanced USAID/WA REGO's performance and its collaboration with its principal regional partners by five categories of activities under Sub-IR 4, which included:
- Categories 1–3: Recruiting and managing the contracts of 28 short- and long-term technical experts that included:
   – Eight experts who were recruited to provide technical assistance (TA) to USAID/WA REGO teams, and four who provided TA to other USAID/WA regional offices;
   – Three experts who supported ongoing USAID/WA REGO activities and initiatives; and
   – Thirteen experts who were then embedded in regional organizations for institutional capacity strengthening.
- Category 4: Facilitating the design and timely execution of a special COVID-19 mitigation package for three private sector organizations, two of which were already being supported by ASSESS under Sub-IR 3.
- Category 5: Facilitating the translation of 130 communication products from English to French and from French to English through a network of qualified translators in different countries.

Best Practices

1. Ensure that any request from a USAID regional or bilateral mission to the implementing mechanism (such as ASSESS) is accompanied by an SOW that clearly outlines the type of expertise required, expected roles, and deliverables for any new, unprecedented types of support. The detailed SOW serves to guide the mobilization of qualified experts with the requisite expertise to provide the required TA.
2. *Collaborative Expert Recruitment and Selection:*
   – Involve the regional partner (requiring institutional strengthening support) and the USAID requesting office in the expert identification process;
   – Give priority to experts with significant experience of working in similar areas in the West Africa region;
   – Given the peculiar nature of regional institutions, ensure that experts with prior experience working with the beneficiary institutions are prioritized for consideration; and

– Collaborate with the USAID requesting offices and the regional partners (requiring institutional strengthening) on the approval of experts for each of the tasks before proceeding to contract them.

Lessons Learned

1. Regional MEL programs (like ASSESS) provide an effective, flexible mechanism for USAID regional offices to provide both short-term and longer-term TA and M&E support to regional institutions through an existing award that can complement and/or provide an alternative to for-profit contracts.
2. The effectiveness of a regional MEL mechanism hinges on the platform's willingness and ability to:
   – Design a proactive strategy that will facilitate the identification, onboarding, orientation, and backstopping of qualified local and regional consultants; and
   – Establish clear SOWs and guidance that define the role of these consultants as well as their obligations to the institution that is hosting them as well as the MEL platform.
3. Having owner-led approaches in the capacity building of regional institutions is key for ensuring ownership and sustainability.

<u>Cross-Cutting Factors That Contributed to ASSESS's Achievements</u>

Best Practices

For Programming

Six examples of best practice that the staff identified as critical to the successful execution of the ASSESS PASA were:
1. The ASSESS SOW (that set the stage for the candidate's application) and the ASSESS agreement (with the successful lead institution, USDA/FAS): a) incorporated lessons learned from an earlier PASA that was executed in Ghana to chart a clear path for the project; b) were committed to supporting local partnerships; and c) expected the project would develop an MEL plan, even though USDA does not require these for PASAs.
2. Over time USAID/WA REGO increased its reliance on ASSESS to execute various types of demand-driven requests that made greater use of the project's own qualified staff. This helped stabilize the project's ability to continue supporting these qualified staff who were critical to the successful management of the CAs being executed by the PASA's extensive network of consultants from various countries.
3. The ASSESS PASA was co-executed with two university-based centers (one in the United States and one in Ghana). This provided a flexible model for tapping the potential of the staff, students, and institutional know-how of both partners in a win–win model that was recognized and appreciated by the wider academic institution, while providing the capacity to manage USAID's needs and expectations.
4. ASSESS had a strong and consistent communication model that helped facilitate a "one project" institutional culture, encouraged direct communication between the project's technical staff and the USAID/WA REGO staff they were supporting (without always going through the chief of party), facilitated the quick identification and resolution of management challenges, and strengthened the capacity of individual staff and partner institutions.
5. During the first years, the project benefitted from two new automated financial and award management systems (one at Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology [KNUST]

and one at the USDA) that facilitated consolidated project financial reporting to USAID and timely requests for award modifications to maintain financial pipelines at all levels.

6. From the start, the University of Rhode Island (URI) encouraged the ASSESS team to co-develop an internal Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) document and the ASSESS Commissioned Activity Technical Procedures Manual.
   - The SOPs served as a living document that guided all operations of the project and covered topics like audits, codes of conduct, evaluation protocol, how to file for travel reimbursement or disbursements, how to complete an official vehicle log, human resources, procurement, and financial management procedures.
   - The Commissioned Activity Technical Procedures Manual was more limited in scope and outlined the processes ASSESS needed to implement CAs like information on the steps for implementing a CA and the time frame for executing specific steps of a CA. This was important internally for the ASSESS team and also to set expectations on the workflow between ASSESS and USAID CA requestors. This manual also included instructions for how to comply with USAID 508 document formatting rules and the procedures for posting documents on the USAID DEC.
   - Both documents were subjected to a comprehensive staff review and updated every two years.

For Modeling and Implementing Localization

7. The principal local partner's (KNUST's) share of ASSESS funding increased from 40 percent in FY 2015 to 96 percent, 83 percent, and 89 percent in FY 2020, FY 2021, and FY 2022, respectively (Annex II.E.2).

Lessons Learned

For Programming

1. Develop clear PASA SOW (to advertise future initiatives) and final agreement documents that incorporate programming and management lessons learned from similar agreements in the recent past.
2. Even though USDA does not require its PASAs to develop an MEL plan, it is wise to do so (as USAID and USDA did in the ASSESS agreement) in order to: a) clarify the standards against which a project will be measured; and b) integrate this requirement into any new PASA SOW or final signed interagency agreement, as was done by USDA and USAID for ASSESS.
3. It is also important to consider how the MEL platform's core team's technical expertise, strong understanding of USAID's needs and approaches, and established working relationships can be capitalized on to execute a wide range of activities and services that do not require external consultants.
4. Encourage USAID/WA REGO and USAID's bilateral offices in West Africa to explore the opportunities of linking university-based centers in the United States with university-based centers in Africa who work in similar areas to strengthen their capacity to support activity design and implementation.
5. Encourage new programs to adopt and maintain an intentional communication model with all of the local and international partners and USAID.
6. Encourage MEL platforms that collaborate with university-based partners in West Africa to identify ways they can help strengthen the capacity of their local partners to adopt automated financial and award systems that facilitate project management that comply with their own university's systems.

7. U.S. university-based partners that collaborate with university-based partners in West Africa should be encouraged to co-develop and regularly review and update SOPs to document realistic procedures, set realistic expectations, and provide transparency in the key implementation, reporting, and compliance processes within the project team. These types of guiding documents provide a basis for effective negotiating, planning, and managing dynamic, flexible, timely, cost-effective, and compliant service provision.

For Modeling and Implementing Localization

8. Encourage USAID to use flexible award mechanisms with a strong local component for service provision on program development and oversight that allow regional and bilateral missions to respond to their emerging needs and the needs of their IPs, regional partners, and multi-lateral partners. Consider more frequent use of the PASA mechanism because it has greater flexibility than a contract and can capitalize on the USDA's relationship with U.S. land grant and sea grant public universities to partner with and strengthen the capacity of local public universities to administer USAID resources and deliver programming that provides quality value-added services to USAID and local systems.

9. Anticipate the enabling conditions needed for successful localization of quality service provision on flexible mechanisms (like the ASSESS PASA) including: a) a U.S. university consortium partner experienced in USAID programming, financial and administrative requirements, M&E, and reporting guidelines; b) a local university partner with robust administrative, financial management, and technical expertise, and the reach required (in the case of ASSESS, West Africa region across 21 countries); and c) existence and engagement of experienced centers within both U.S. and local university partner institutions that specialize in outreach and have technical staff other than faculty.

Question 2: To what extent has the ASSESS PASA addressed capacity needs of USAID/WA REGO and USAID-funded activities that interacted with ASSESS?

The ASSESS activities under Sub-IR 1 were very effective in creating a flexible mechanism for the design, execution, and monitoring of evaluations and assessments for regional studies that met USAID's rigorous quality standards.

ASSESS's Sub-IR 2 activities allowed a range of stakeholders (including USAID and its regional non-USG partners) to resource "the generation, synthesis, translation, dissemination and update of evidence" needed to address the major questions associated with USAID's 2022 Agency Learning Agenda.

The PASA supported two broad categories of activities under Sub-IR 3 that complemented USAID/WA REGO's existing support for MEL in its regional programs by:
● Helping the USAID/WA REGO Program Analytics Unit review and ensure the quality of the IPs' reported indicators; and
● Pilot testing a new model for strengthening the M&E capacity of three of the USAID/WA private sector IPs that were working with the USAID/WA REGO Trade Team both prior to and during the pandemic.

The PASA's activities under Sub-IR 4:
● Made it easier for USAID/WA REGO to access the short-term and longer-term consultants it needed for quality programming;
● Strengthened the capacity of three leading regional economic organizations in West Africa (Economic Community of West African States [ECOWAS], *Union Economique et Monétaire Ouest Africaine* [UEMOA], and *Conseil Ouest et Centre Africain pour la Recherche et le Développement*

Agricoles/West and Central African Council for Agricultural Research and Development [CORAF/WECARD]) as well as their communication and collaboration with USAID/WA REGO;

- Facilitated the recruitment and contract management of the SERVIR West Africa coordinator who established the program in the region;
- Provided a mechanism for USAID/WA REGO to pilot test an innovative model for strengthening the capacity of West Africa's private sector to mitigate the short-term economic and health impacts of future pandemics; and
- Increased the linkages and synergies across the disparate USAID/WA REGO portfolio by making it easier for USAID/WA REGO and the PASA to access a network of West Africa-based vetted translation services.

Especially important, the ASSESS PASA was able to rapidly provide the Trade Team with a mechanism to mobilize a quick and significant COVID-19 response program when many of the other activities were forced to slow down (Annex II.E.1).

Question 3: What unintended contribution has the ASSESS PASA's approach and activities achieved relative to indirectly supporting USAID's localization agenda, which was announced during the last two years of the project?

USAID's Goals for Local Capacity Strengthening

- Pilot testing and scaling up a new mechanism for accessing qualified local consultants and local translation services in each of the countries served by USAID/WA REGO that enriched the experience of the 133 consultants (some of whom participated in more than one CA) as well as the institutions to which they were attached to design and execute USAID-funded programming;
- Localizing most of the core PASA management activities with its local university partner (KNUST Bureau of Integrated Rural Development), which strengthened its capacity to manage donor-funded grants; and
- The co-design (with local partners) of:
    - A new model of virtual M&E and communication training that was successfully pilot tested in FY 2023;
    - A new generation of localization-friendly SOPs, tools, and planning processes;
    - A new model for involving local actors in the design of the next generation of USAID's regional trade and investment activities in West Africa;
    - The first regional Local Works Co-Creation Workshop and Solicitation Conference, which led to the award of three USAID grants directly to local associations; and
    - A highly innovative COVID-19 mitigation initiative that demonstrated how strengthening the capacity of local partners in M&E can provide the type of "early-warning systems" that USAID needs to design and implement more effective disaster mitigation programs for private sector IPs.

For Modeling and Implementing Localization

If the ASSESS PASA sub-award from USDA (a USG agency) to KNUST (a local partner) was considered as direct USAID funding to a local partner (which it is not because PASAs are excluded from USAID's indicator definition), ASSESS as a project would dramatically outperform the agency-wide result of two percent direct local funding in the Program Development and Oversight Sector in FY 2022, as well as the results of the Economic Growth Sector, all other sectors, and the agency-wide FY 2025 target of 25

percent.[8] KNUST received an annual average of approximately 79 percent of ASSESS PASA funding over 10 years (Annex II.E.3) and 89 percent in FY 2022. In addition, while other sectors measured in the USAID localization progress report show an upward trend of direct local funding from FY 2020 to FY 2022, the Program Development and Oversight Sector does not (Figure 3).

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[8] USAID. 2023. Moving Toward a Model of Locally Led Development FY 2022 Localization Progress Report. Washington, D.C.: USAID. Pg. 2–7. https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/2023-06/FY%202022%20Localization%20Progress%20Report-June-12-23_vFINAL_1.pdf.

1.0. Overview

1.1. Activity Background

1.1.1. Mechanism Description

The United States Agency for International Development West Africa Regional Economic Growth Office (USAID/WA REGO) carries out mission-level programs to support broad-based and inclusive growth in agriculture, environment, energy, and trade in 21 countries of West Africa (Figure 1). These interventions include both regional activities that affect multiple countries as well as bilateral activities in 11 non-presence countries. This broad-based geographic and programmatic mandate creates a host of special challenges for meeting USAID's rigorous monitoring and evaluation (M&E) requirements; at the same time it presents a host of new opportunities for USAID and its local partners to learn across geographic locales, programmatic interventions, and sectoral foci.

To meet these challenges, USAID/WA REGO entered into an initial five-year (March 12, 2014–March 13, 2019)[9] Participating Agency Service Agreement (PASA) to initiate the first phase of the Analytical Support Services and Evaluations for Sustainable Systems (ASSESS) Project.[10] In Fiscal Year (FY) 2019, the ASSESS PASA was granted a no-cost extension to December 31, 2020, which was extended to December 13, 2023, in FY 2020. The United States Department of Agriculture, Foreign Agricultural Service (USDA/FAS) had oversight of the ASSESS PASA and sub-awarded the University of Rhode Island Coastal Resources Center (URI-CRC) (FY 2014–FY 2024) and Delaware State University[11] (DSU) (FY 2014–FY 2018) to provide management and research support to the project. The Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology Bureau of Integrated Rural Development (KNUST-BIRD) was the project's principal local partner (FY 2014–FY 2024). In FY 2017, ASSESS signed partnership agreements with two institutions in Cote d'Ivoire, namely *Université Félix Houphouët-Boigny* (UFHB) and *Ecole Nationale Supérieure de Statistique et d'Economie Appliqué*e (ENSEA) as associate institutions[12] of the project.

Since its inception the ASSESS PASA has been designed around three to four programmatic components (evaluation and studies; knowledge and information management; monitoring; and other support), but the precise mandate of each of these components has shifted slightly in response to the evolving needs and priorities of USAID/WA REGO (Table 1).

Table 1. Evolution of the Principal Components of the ASSESS PASA (FY 2014–FY 2024)

FY 2014–FY 2015	FY 2015–FY 2017	FY 2017–FY 2019	FY 2019–FY 2024
Program evaluation	Program evaluation	Evaluations and studies	M&E for improved programmatic interventions
Capacity building of local institutions in M&E	Capacity building of local institutions in M&E	Monitoring	Technical assistance and organizational capacity building of local and regional organizations

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[9] Participating Agency Service Agreement (PASA) between the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and United States Department of Agriculture, Foreign Agricultural Service, Office of Capacity Building and Development (USDA/FAS/OCBD). Washington, D.C.: USAID/West Africa. March 12, 2014. Pg. 1.

[10] Legally, ASSESS is a PASA. In many cases, however, it was referred to as a project. For the purposes of this report, both terms are sometimes used in official documents.

[11] From Quarter 2 of FY 2018 on, DSU became an associate institution rather than a core partner of the project.

[12] The partnership agreements with these two associate institutions enabled ASSESS to benefit from a broad range of technical expertise from diverse West Africa institutions in the implementation of commissioned activities (CAs).

FY 2014–FY 2015	FY 2015–FY 2017	FY 2017–FY 2019	FY 2019–FY 2024
Knowledge and information dissemination	Knowledge and information dissemination	Knowledge and information management	Learning agenda to promote experimentation, innovation, and measured risk taking
The Regional Centre of Excellence[13]		Other support services[14]	

Source: ASSESS team, based on PASA records. December 2023.

These activities were designed to achieve one intermediate result (IR) and four sub-intermediate results (sub-IRs):
- **IR**: Body of knowledge and evidence for improved resource allocation, policy advocacy, and program planning increased:
  - Sub-IR 1: Recommendations from evaluations and studies operationalized;
  - Sub-IR 2: Availability of information for decision making increased;
  - Sub-IR 3: Performance data collection and reporting improved; and
  - Sub-IR 4: Requested support provided to enhance USAID's performance.

1.1.2. Goals and Objectives

In the original agreement, it was expected that the principal target audience would be USAID/WA REGO. In FY 2016, USAID expanded the project's mandate to allow "buy-in" support to other USAID/WA offices,[15] USAID bilateral missions,[16] and other United States Government (USG) agencies in the region (e.g., Peace Corps and USDA).

The project team was divided into two technical and administrative sub-teams (Table 2):
- A Technical Team that worked directly with and backstopped the external consultants[17] recruited to implement various "commissioned activities" (CAs)[18]; and
- An Administrative Team that provided administrative and logistic support for the CAs as well as routine backstopping of the Technical Team.

Table 2. Evolution of the ASSESS PASA Accra Office Staffing (FY 2014–FY 2024) (N = number of staff)

Category of Staff	FY 14	FY 15	FY 16	FY 17	FY 18	FY 19	FY 20	FY 21	FY 22	FY 23	FY 24
Technical	3	4	3	2	4	5	5	5	5	5	5
Administrative	8	9	6	6	7	9	6	9	8	6	6
Total	11	13	9	8	11	14	11	14	13	11	11

Source: See Annex II.B for a detailed explanation of the staff structure and roles in different time periods.

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[13] In 2015, the fourth component in the original agreement—the Africa Centre of Excellence (ACE)—was spun off into a separate USAID-supported initiative.

[14] The addition of "other support services" to the project components in FY 2017 became necessary in view of the project's expanded scope, as reflected in the requests received from USAID.

[15] These offices include the USAID/WA Regional Program Office (RPO), the USAID/WA Regional Peace and Governance Office (RPGO), and the USAID/WA Regional Health Office (RHO).

[16] These bilateral missions included USAID/Ghana, USAID/Cote d'Ivoire, USAID/Mali, and USAID/Nigeria.

[17] ASSESS recruited external consultants to execute CAs such as the evaluations, assessments, and surveys under Sub-IR 1 and to facilitate the learning events under Sub-IR 2.

[18] The Technical Team was comprised of the deputy chief of party, activity and evaluation manager, M&E specialist, learning and events manager, and communication specialist. The Administrative Team was comprised of the chief of party, accountant, office administrator, human resource and operations coordinator, and driver.

As envisioned in the original agreement, most of the evaluations and studies[19] executed under Sub-IR 1 were carried out by consultants working with and under the supervision of the ASSESS technical staff. ASSESS oversaw the recruitment of the consultants, the development of the Response Scopes of Work (SOWs),[20] the orientation and training of the consultants in any standard protocols that they needed to execute the evaluations or respective CAs, as well as the implementation, analysis, and development of the completed activity report. In contrast, the majority of the activities under the other sub-IRs (2, 3, and 4) were executed by the ASSESS Technical Team with less extensive support from CAs.

To ensure close communication between the ASSESS Accra staff and the two principal implementing partners (IPs)—KNUST-BIRD and URI-CRC—the USDA/FAS project manager implemented: 1) weekly meetings of the IPs and senior staff at a fixed time on a fixed date (Tuesday) that met without fail every week of the almost 10-year duration of the PASA, except during major holidays; as well as 2) bi-monthly one-on-one meetings with the USAID/WA REGO contracting officer's representative (COR) who was based in Accra. To ensure effective communication with USAID, ASSESS organized: 1) annual work planning meetings with the USAID/WA REGO teams and support offices,[21] which enabled the project to obtain information on activities to prioritize in a given fiscal year; 2) mid-year review meetings during which ASSESS updated USAID/WA REGO on its activities, received feedback, and confirmed planned activities for the remaining half of each fiscal year; and 3) monthly meetings between the ASSESS Accra staff and the COR to provide activity updates.

1.1.3. Project Development Hypothesis

The underlying development hypothesis for ASSESS was that:
- IF the recommendations from evaluations, studies, and other research are operationalized by USAID and its regional partners (ASSESS Sub-IR 1);
- IF information from evaluations, studies, and other research is made readily available for programmatic decision making and adaptive management (ASSESS Sub-IR 2);
- IF USAID/WA REGO IPs improve in performance data collection and reporting (ASSESS Sub-IR 3); and
- IF USAID/WA REGO offices receive adequate and timely support services[22] to enhance their performance (ASSESS Sub-IR 4);

THEN…
- Improved evidence-based decision making, including program planning, resource allocation, and policy advocacy, will occur across USAID/WA REGO's programs and intervention areas in the West Africa region (ASSESS IR); and
- There will be sustained development and broad-based economic growth in West Africa (USAID/WA Regional Development Cooperative Strategy [RDCS] Regional Development Objective [RDO] 2).

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[19] The term "evaluations and studies" includes related activities, including assessments and commissioned research.
[20] The ASSESS Project's initial response to a USAID activity request was a "Response SOW." Each "Response SOW" described: 1) USAID's activity request; (2) the ASSESS Project's approach to implementing the activity; 3) the type and number of experts required to execute the activity; 4) the ASSESS staff tasked with managing the proposed activity; and 5) the proposed budget. Once USAID approved the Response SOW, ASSESS would implement the requested activity.
[21] The support offices include the Development Outreach and Communications (DOCs) team and the contracting office.
[22] These support services included: 1) mobilization and management of short- and long-term technical assistants; 2) event planning and management; 3) documents translation; 4) sub-grants management; and 5) other types of logistic support.

1.1.4. Results Framework

The ASSESS results framework in Figure 2 provides a graphical representation of how the different sub-IR results are interlinked and were expected to contribute to the achievement of the PASA's IR and overall goal.

Figure 2. ASSESS Results Framework (FY 2020–FY 2024)[23]
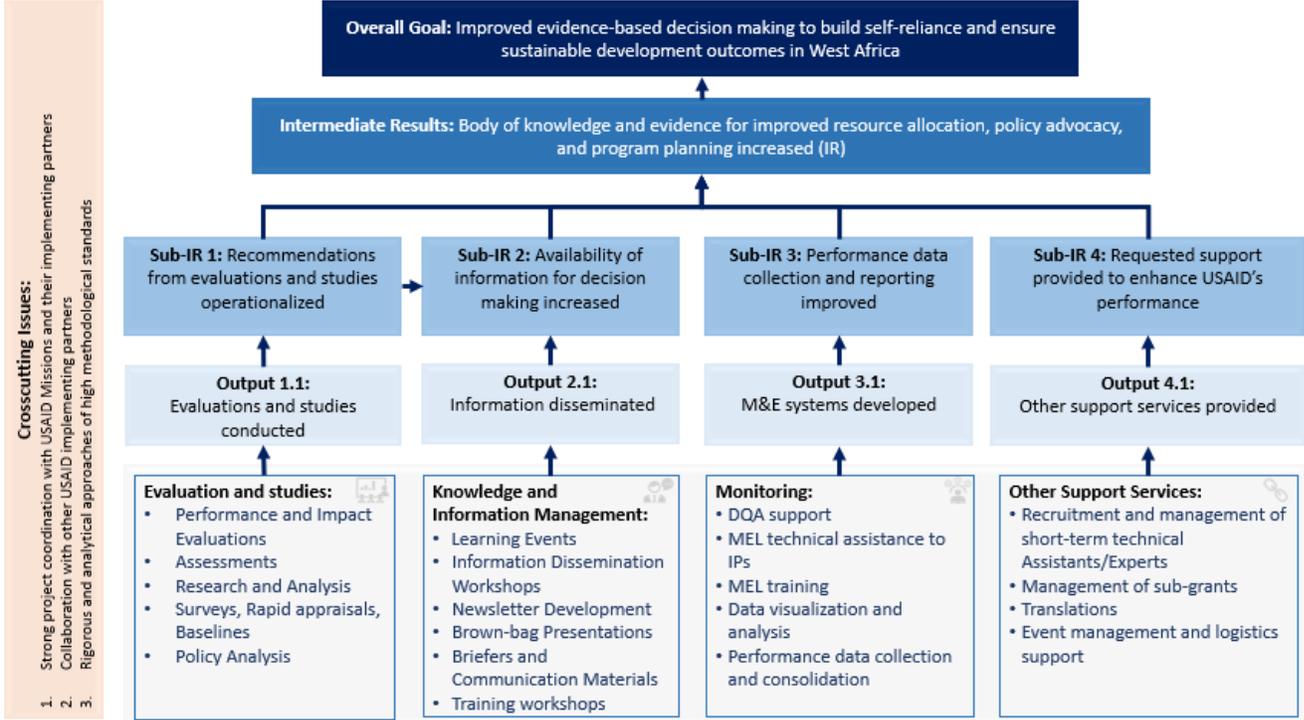
Source: ASSESS. 2021. ASSESS Revised Activity Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning (MEL) Plan. September 2021. Accra, Ghana: ASSESS for USAID/WA REGO. Pg. 8.

1.2. Final Report Purpose and Approach

1.2.1. Purpose

The purpose of this report is to assess and document the extent to which the goal, IR, and sub-IRs of the ASSESS PASA have been achieved and how the implementation of the PASA's interventions contributed to achieving USAID/WA's RDO 2 of "inclusive broad-based economic growth" through "improved evidence-based decision-making, program planning, resource allocation and policy advocacy."[24] The final report is expected to provide USAID, its IPs, and stakeholders with data on

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[23] In the light of the evolving needs and priorities of USAID/WA REGO, ASSESS revised its Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning (MEL) Plan (aka AMELP) in FY 2020. This revision was consistent with the current orientation of the project, to facilitate performance monitoring and reporting. The revision is consistent with ADS 201.3.4.10, which stipulates that "the Activity MEL Plan should be revised as needed in response to changes in the activity or context that occur during the life of the activity." The ASSESS results framework and related key performance indicators were consequently updated.

[24] In its 2015–2020 Regional Development Cooperation Strategy (RDCS), USAID/WA committed itself to supporting "broad-based economic growth and resilience" (RDO 2). The 2020–2025 USAID/WA RDCS had a similar development objective to support "inclusive broad-based economic growth (RDO 2). In both RDCS documents, USAID/WA emphasizes "evidence-based decision-making" including for "policy, programming and resource allocation" as a cross-cutting theme for achieving the

outcomes, best practices, and lessons learned to inform future programming[25] by USAID and USDA/FAS in West Africa.

To streamline the report writing process, USDA/FAS asked the team to focus on three questions[26]:

- Question 1: To what extent has the ASSESS PASA achieved its purpose and goals, IR, and sub-IRs?
- Question 2: To what extent has the ASSESS PASA addressed capacity needs of USAID/WA REGO and USAID-funded activities that interacted with ASSESS?
- Question 3: What unintended contribution has the ASSESS PASA's approach and activities achieved relative to indirectly supporting USAID's localization agenda, which was announced during the last two years of the project?[27]

1.2.2. Data Sources

USDA does not require any project that is executed with a PASA to develop a monitoring, evaluation, and learning (MEL) plan. The ASSESS PASA did, however, develop an initial MEL Plan that was revised over the life of the activity (LOA).[28] For this reason, the final report relies heavily on the indicators that were tracked in the PASA's performance indicator tracking table (PITT) (Annex I) as well as the PASA's quarterly and semi-annual reports. This information was supplemented by data from:

- Two surveys conducted by ASSESS in FY 2021 and FY 2023 that obtained the feedback from the USAID/WA REGO agreement officer's representatives (AORs) and CORs that was needed to measure the PASA's two outcome indicators: 1) Outcome Indicator 1: "Percentage of USAID designs that are informed by ASSESS evaluations and studies"; and 2) Outcome Indicator 1.1: Percentage of approved evaluation reports for which actions have been taken or implemented" (Annex I)[29];

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development objectives. 1) USAID. 2014. USAID/West Africa Regional Development Cooperation Strategy 2015–2020. Accra, Ghana (November). Pg. 34, 64. https://2017-2020.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1860/RDCS_West_Africa_December_2020_External_508_1_2.pdf; and 2) USAID. 2020. USAID/West Africa and the Sahel Regional Development Cooperation Strategy (2020–2025). Accra, Ghana (December). Pg. 6, 13. https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/2022-05/USAID_West-Africa-and-USAID_Senegal_SRO_RDCS.pdf.

[25] Especially for MEL platforms and other USAID activities set up to provide analytical support services, similar to ASSESS.
[26] KNUST-BIRD. 2023. Close-Out Reporting Contract Agreement for the ASSESS PASA. Accra, Ghana: KNUST-BIRD for ASSESS and USAID/WA REGO. Pg. 3.
[27] In January 2022, USAID renewed its commitment to Local Capacity Strengthening (LCS) as a central goal of its development programs in Africa and added a new generation of contractual and budget targets and processes for monitoring the agency's progress in achieving these targets. The agency's goals for localization were first laid out in a series of presentations by USAID Director Dr. Samantha Powers in December 2021 (https://www.devex.com/news/usaid-chief-samantha-power-details-localization-push-102256). In November 2022, USAID issued four additional documents: 1) USAID. 2022. Local Capacity Strengthening Policy. Washington, D.C.: USAID; 2) USAID. 2022. Local Capacity Strengthening Policy. Public Feedback. Washington, D.C.: Environmental Incentives for USAID (October 2022); 3) USAID. Local Capacity Strengthening Policy. Guide to Distinguishing Tools Used for Local Capacity Strengthening. Washington, D.C.: USAID; 4) USAID. 2022. Policy for Localization of Humanitarian Assistance. Washington, D.C.: USAID (Draft October 2022). See also https://www.usaid.gov/local-capacity-strengthening-policy.
[28] 1) ASSESS. 2015. ASSESS Performance Management Plan (PMP). Accra, Ghana: ASSESS for USAID/WA REGO; 2) ASSESS. 2021. ASSESS Revised Activity MEL Plan. Accra, Ghana: ASSESS for USAID/WA REGO.
[29] This includes (Annex I): 1) IR-Level Outcome Indicator 1: Percentage of USAID designs that are informed by ASSESS evaluations and studies; and 2) Sub-IR 1-Level Outcome Indicator 1.1: Percentage of approved evaluation reports for which actions have been taken or implemented. The data needed to measure these indicators was collected during a series of key informant interviews with the AORs and CORs of the USAID/WA REGO and bilateral mission projects that were affected by the ASSESS-managed evaluations under Sub-IR 1. During these interviews, the staff persons were asked to identify if and how: 1) each of the ASSESS evaluations and studies had influenced the design of any programs (Outcome Indicator 1); and 2) how many of the reports' recommendations had resulted in follow-up actions (Outcome Indicator 1.1). This information was then triangulated with the project documents and/or other official approved and properly validated documents before it was counted in the indicator.

- The final reports on the ASSESS-facilitated collaborating, learning, and adapting (CLA) events, most of which were based on a survey of all or a representative sample of the people who attended each of these events; and
- Five draft technical briefs that ASSESS co-developed with their local partners (in FY 2024) and were designed to highlight some of the short- and longer-term impacts, in relation to the project's IR and sub-IRs. The draft technical briefs[30] also include an initial analysis of some of the key lessons and best practices from the project for USAID's future MEL platforms (see Annex VIII).

This information was supplemented by having six of the key ASSESS PASA staff involved in a highly participatory final report writing process.[31]

Text Box 2. The Methodology Used to Measure Outcome Indicators 1 and 1.1 for the ASSESS PASA

ASSESS conducted two separate post-evaluation/assessment surveys in FY 2021 and FY 2023 with the aim to obtain USAID's feedback on completed evaluations and assessments. The surveys assessed aspects of the evaluations/assessments, including utilization of the recommendations. The surveys also aimed to enable ASSESS to obtain information for estimating the two main outcome indicators of the project.

The methodology employed for the surveys involved qualitative inputs with structured questionnaires from selected respondents (mainly AORs and CORs and team leads in charge of commissioning the evaluation or assessment), primarily through key informant interviews.

ASSESS developed and shared the survey tool via an online link with the respondents who completed and submitted their responses electronically. ASSESS analyzed the responses and developed brief reports on the surveys.

Respondents were mainly USAID AORs or CORs and team leads from the requesting offices who were involved in the planning and commissioning of the evaluations or assessments. Nine respondents participated in both the first survey (FY 2021) and the second survey (FY 2023). Some respondents who had led on more than one evaluation or assessment submitted multiple entries to cover the number of activities they served on as the lead person. The FY 2021 survey respondents were drawn from USAID/WA REGO (seven), USAID/Ghana (one), and Peace Corps Benin (one), while the FY 2023 survey had respondents from USAID/WA REGO (seven), USAID/Africa Bureau (one), and USAID/Nigeria (one).

In addition to the survey, ASSESS conducted a key informant interview with the ASSESS COR who also serves as a project management specialist for MEL with USAID/WA REGO.

Source: ASSESS team, based on PASA records. January 2024.

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[30] The technical briefs include: 1) Lessons Learned from ASSESS for Strengthening the Capacity of Regional Institutions by USAID: The Case of CORAF (a good example of Sub-IR 4-level impact); 2) Lessons Learned from ASSESS for Integrating Students into Applied Research Programs for USAID (a good example of Sub-IR 1-level impact); 3) Lessons Learned from ASSESS for Virtual Learning Platforms (a good example of Sub- IR 2-level impact); 4) Shaping USAID's Programming through Evaluations: Lessons Learned from the ASSESS Regional PASA (a good example of Sub-IR 1-level impact); and 5) Lessons Learned from ASSESS for Making Localization Work in USAID's Regional Programs. A brief summary of the technical briefs is presented in Annex VIII.

[31] The key participants in this exercise include: 1) Charles Nornoo, chief of party; 2) Barbara Arthur, deputy chief of party; 3) Patrick Koomson, activity and evaluation manager; 4) Michael Ashiteye, M&E specialist; 5) Jennifer Tchorly-Boadi, events and learning manager; and 6) Mavis Donkor, communication and knowledge management specialist. Barbara Arthur, the ASSESS deputy chief of party, was the key person in charge of managing this participatory process. Ms. Arthur was backstopped by Della E. McMillan, an independent consultant based in Gainesville, Florida, on the final production and revision of the report.

2.0. Sub-IR 1: Recommendations From Evaluations and Studies Operationalized

The activities under this ASSESS sub-IR were designed to:
- Facilitate USAID/WA REGO in conducting high-quality evaluations in multiple countries; and
- Provide additional support, as needed, to USAID/WA REGO in conducting other types of assessments and studies related to its programming.

2.1. Targets

FY 2014–FY 2019: The original MEL Plan for ASSESS included annual and five-year targets.[32]

FY 2020–FY 2023: When the MEL Plan was revised in FY 2020, the new targets, especially for evaluations and studies, were reduced because the original ones were overly ambitious given the high demand for more diversified support services.

2.2. Achieved

By the end of the project, USAID/WA REGO had requested assistance with the execution of 29 evaluations and studies, 23 (79 percent) of which were for USAID/WA REGO and six (21 percent) of which were implemented as buy-ins for USAID bilateral missions (i.e., USAID/Ghana, USAID/Cote d'Ivoire, USAID/Nigeria,[33] USAID/Mali,[34] and other USG offices, including USAID/Africa Bureau, USDA, and Peace Corps, Benin).

Table 3. Total Number of Evaluations, Assessments, and Studies Conducted by ASSESS (FY 2014–FY 2024) (italics = sub-numbers for each category)

Categories of Support	FY 14	FY 15	FY 16	FY 17	FY 18	FY 19	FY 20	FY 21	FY 22	FY 23	FY 24	LOA
1. Evaluations												*13*
1.A. Mid-term	1	0	1	1	0	1	1	0	0	1	0	*6*
1.B. Final	0	1	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	3	0	*6*
1.C. Ex-post	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	*1*
2. Assessments and Analyses												*11*
2.A. General assessments and analyses to support specific USAID/WA REGO initiatives	0	0	0	0	1	1	2	1	2	0	0	*7*
2.B. Assessments and analyses to support the USAID/WA	0	0	0	0	0	0	4[36]	0	0	0	0	*4*

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[32] Work plans were annual. The MEL Plan developed at the start of the project had five-year targets (FY 2014–FY 2019). In the revision of the MEL Plan in FY 2020, new targets were set for the additional years (i.e., FY 2020–FY 2023).

[33] The USAID/Nigeria activity (i.e., evaluation of the West Africa Trade Hub) was jointly commissioned with the USAID/WA REGO Trade Team.

[34] USAID/Mali and the USAID/Africa Bureau (based in Washington) jointly commissioned one activity (i.e., an ex-post evaluation of the USAID/Mali Out of School Youth Project (2010–2015), which ASSESS conducted in FY 2022).

[36] ASSESS conducted four assessments and analyses in support of the USAID/WA RDCS development: 1) West Africa Region Gender Analysis; 2) West Africa Region Youth Analysis; 3) West Africa Region Resilience; and 4) West Africa Region Private Sector Assessment.

Categories of Support	FY 14	FY 15	FY 16	FY 17	FY 18	FY 19	FY 20	FY 21	FY 22	FY 23	FY 24	LOA
RDCS (2020–2025)[35]												
3. Baseline Studies												**2**
3.A. USDA baseline survey	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	*1*
3.B. Baseline methodology review	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	*1*
4. Applied Research on COVID-19	0	0	0	0	0	0	0		3	0	0	**3**
Total												**29**

Source: ASSESS team, based on PASA records. December 2023.

2.2.1. Category 1: Evaluations

Between FY 2014 and FY 2023, ASSESS executed 13 multi-country evaluations comprising six mid-term performance evaluations, six final performance evaluations, and one ex-post evaluation (Table 3). All but one[37] of these were approved (92 percent of target) by USAID even though the evaluation results were presented at an ASSESS-facilitated post-evaluation learning event, because ASSESS never received written approval from USAID/WA. All 12 of the approved evaluations were posted on the USAID Development Experience Clearinghouse (DEC) in accordance with ADS 201.3.5.18.

2.2.2. Category 2: Assessments and Analyses

During the same time period, ASSESS conducted 11 assessments and analyses for USAID/WA REGO (Annex V.D). Four of these assessments and analyses were conducted in support of specific USAID/WA REGO initiatives; three were conducted for two USAID bilateral missions (i.e., USAID/Ghana and USAID Cote d'Ivoire); and four were conducted to support the USAID/WA RDCS (2020–2025). USAID approved all 11 assessments and analyses, and four of the 11 assessments (36 percent) were posted on the DEC at USAID's request.[38]

The four assessments that ASSESS supported toward the USAID/WA RDCS (three of which are published on the DEC)[39] are a good illustration of the type of demand-driven support that ASSESS provided to the West Africa regional mission (Text Box 3).

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[35] USAID/WA and USAID/Senegal/Sahel Regional Office (SRO). 2020. Regional Development Cooperation Strategy (RDCS): December 16, 2020–December 15, 2025. www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/2022-05/USAID_West-Africa-and-USAID_Senegal_SRO_RDCS.pdf.

[37] The only evaluation report for which a written approval was not received is the final performance evaluation of the USAID/WA Energy Portfolio (2009–2014) conducted in FY 2015, at the request of the USAID/WA Energy Team.

[38] ASSESS was mandated to publish all approved evaluation reports, in compliance with ADS 201.3.5.18. For assessments and analyses, any publication had to be based on a direct request from USAID.

[39] Although USAID requested for all four RDCS assessment reports to be published on the DEC, the Private Sector Engagement report was not approved by the DEC team for publication. The DEC team could not publish the Private Sector Engagement report because of the mention of "Nicaragua" in the report.

Text Box 3. ASSESS Support for the Development of the USAID/WA RDCS (2020–2025)[40]

The RDCS remains a pivotal element in USAID's operational framework, serving as the strategic planning cornerstone for regional development initiatives. It guides the Country Development Cooperation Strategies (CDCSs) by integrating country-specific goals into a broader regional context, addressing transboundary challenges, and aligning with U.S. foreign policy objectives. The RDCS is instrumental in identifying regional priorities, influencing resource allocation, and enhancing programming across multiple countries.

In support of the development of the USAID/WA RDCS (2020–2025), ASSESS conducted assessments covering four major areas: 1) Youth, 2) Gender, 3) Resilience, and 4) Private Sector Engagement.

In addition, ASSESS recruited an expert (RDCS coordinator) to conduct additional literature reviews, synthesize the findings of the various assessments, and assist with drafting portions of the USAID/WA RDCS (2020–2025). The RDCS coordinator also facilitated consultations within the mission and with key stakeholders in the region, which altogether contributed to development and finalization of the RDCS.

Source: ASSESS team, based on PASA records. February 2024.

2.2.3. Category 3: Baseline Surveys

The PASA was also tasked with supporting several types of applied research that were not envisioned in the original agreement. This included:
- Reviewing the baseline methodology for the West Africa Trade Hub and African Partners Network[41] and providing recommendations to USAID and the IP (in FY 2014); and
- Conducting a baseline survey to inform the design of two USDA Food for Progress (FFPr) projects in Ghana that were focused on the poultry sector (i.e., the Ghana Poultry Project [GPP[42]] and the Assisting Management in the Poultry and Layer Industries by Feed Improvement and Efficiency Strategies [AMPLIFIES[43]] Ghana Project).[44] The baseline report was approved by the USDA, and ASSESS organized a learning event to share the findings and recommendations with key stakeholders under Sub-IR 2.

2.2.4. Category 4: Applied Research on COVID-19

A second demand-driven innovative request for assistance (that was not envisioned in the original agreement) was the ASSESS PASA's support for a series of applied research studies that the USAID/WA Trade Team commissioned as part of the support[45] to three private sector organizations—Dignity Do The Right Thing (DTRT) Apparel, Ethical Apparel Africa (EAA), and Blue Skies[46]—to mitigate the impact of COVID-19 on their business operations.

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[40] USAID/WA and USAID/SRO. 2020. Regional Development Cooperation Strategy (RDCS): December 16, 2020–December 15, 2025. www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/2022-05/USAID_West-Africa-and-USAID_Senegal_SRO_RDCS.pdf.

[41] The West Africa Trade Hub and African Partners Network was a USAID-funded initiative implemented in select West African countries between 2014 and 2019: https://www.tfafacility.org/sites/default/files/2021-04/Activity%20Fact%20sheet%20-%20West%20Africa%20Trade%20Hub%20and%20African%20Partners%20Network.pdf.

[42] The GPP was implemented by the Agricultural Cooperative Development International/Volunteers in Overseas Cooperative Assistance (ACDI/VOCA).

[43] The AMPLIFIES Ghana Project was implemented by the American Soybean Association (ASA).

[44] The survey report: 1) provided meaningful and up-to-date information that informed the planning and successful implementation of the two projects in Ghana; and 2) established benchmarks and performance measures against which project impact will be measured.

[45] Refer to Chapter 5 (Sub-IR 4) for details of the actual support USAID provided to the three private sector partners and the results that emanated from it. This chapter only focuses on the three PhD studies that were conducted on the margins of this activity to inform future programming and policy directions.

[46] An export-oriented fruit processing company based in Doboro, Ghana.

One innovative aspect of the ASSESS support was the selection of three PhD students from KNUST to execute the studies through a CA agreement with KNUST-BIRD, which was led by the three KNUST PhD students under the direct supervision of their advisors (Text Box 4).

Text Box 4. ASSESS Support for Applied Research on COVID-19, FY 2020–FY 2023

Focus of the Studies: Three PhD candidates from KNUST were selected to lead the three studies[47]:
- 1) Repurposing and policy direction of the Ghana apparel industry in the face of pandemics: COVID-19 in focus;
- 2) COVID-19 and the apparel industry in Ghana: A contextual analysis of operational challenges and socio-economic impact; and
- 3) Assessing COVID-19 shocks along the fresh mango value chain in Ghana: Coping strategies and impacts.

Roles of Stakeholders: The research studies were conducted through a joint collaboration involving USAID/WA REGO, ASSESS, and its partner KNUST and the three private sector organizations.

The PhD candidates led the research process with support from supervisors drawn from KNUST who provided technical guidance and ensured the PhD research met the standards and requirements set by the university.

ASSESS' two principal investigators at KNUST, together with the supervisors, and some volunteers from the USAID/WA REGO Trade Team assisted the candidates throughout the research process, including framing the research questions, developing proposals, reviewing drafts, and preparing the students for seminars and thesis defense. In addition, ASSESS managed disbursement of funds to the PhD candidates and organized periodic seminars for the candidates to update USAID and the private sector partners on the progress of the research.

The three private sector partners—Blue Skies, DTRT Apparel, and EAA—provided field access and facilitated the PhD candidates' data collection at their facilities. Their domain knowledge about the apparel and agriculture sectors also helped shape the research.

USAID/WA REGO provided funding for the research and participated in periodic seminars to give feedback on the direction and practical applicability of the studies.

Results and Utilization: ASSESS shared the two completed PhD theses focused on the apparel industry (i.e., PhD research studies 1 and 2) with USAID in November 2023. The third PhD research study was completed in March 2024 and shared with USAID. The findings and recommendations from the research studies are expected to inform policy directions and contribute to shaping future programming.

Source: ASSESS team, based on PASA records. January 2024.

2.3. Early Evidence of Results/Impact

Two of the best indicators of early impact of the evaluations and studies is the evidence from the ASSESS post-evaluation/assessment survey that (Table 4; Text Box 5):
- The high percentage (92 percent) of the ASSESS-managed REGO and bilateral buy-in evaluations and studies resulted in follow-up actions being taken; and
- Thirty-two percent of the new project designs (that the AORs and CORs were involved with) were informed by the results of the ASSESS evaluations and studies.

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[47] References to the three studies can also be found in Annex III.

Table 4. Early Evidence of Results/Impact of the ASSESS PASA Sub-IR 1 Activities (Note: x/y: x = achieved; y= target; (x%) = % achievement of target)

Indicators	FY 21	FY 22	FY 23	LOA
Outcome Indicator 1[48]: Percentage of USAID designs that are informed by ASSESS activities	16%/30% (53%)	n/a	32%/30% (107%)	32%/30% (107%)
Outcome Indicator 1.1[49]: Percentage of approved evaluation reports for which actions have been taken or implemented	82%/90% (91%)	n/a	83%/90% (92%)	83%/90% (92%)

Source: ASSESS PITT, Annex I.
Methodology: Text Box 2 of this report.

Text Box 5. Early Evidence That the ASSESS-Funded Sub-IR 1 Evaluation, Assessment, and Research Studies Influenced Program Designs and Implementation

Environment: The West Africa Biodiversity and Low Emissions Development (WABiLED) activity design incorporated findings and recommendations from the West Africa Biodiversity and Climate Change (WA-BiCC) end-of-project evaluation. Similarly, the Municipal Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH) program actively integrated insights from ASSESS evaluations, namely the Sanitation Service Delivery (SSD) evaluation and the African Water Association Capacity Building Program/West Africa-WASH (AfriCap/WA-WASH) evaluation.

Agriculture and Feed the Future (FtF): The Partnership for Agricultural Research, Education and Development (PAIRED) Activity in West Africa, which concluded in December 2022, drew on the insights derived from the West Africa Seed Program evaluation conducted by ASSESS in 2016. Findings and recommendations from the PAIRED final evaluation conducted in 2022 are currently informing the design of the next generation of USAID/WA agricultural programing. Additionally, the design of the support to the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Department of Agriculture for the implementation of the ECOWAS Agriculture Policy (ECOWAP) actively took into account the Operational Plan developed by the ASSESS expert embedded in ECOWAS in 2021. The Enhancing Growth through Regional Agricultural Input Systems (EnGRAIS) activity found its design influenced by the evaluation of the West Africa Fertilizer Program (WAFP) Activity. This evaluation provided critical insights into regional agricultural input systems, actively shaping the EnGRAIS initiative to align with lessons learned and best practices identified through the evaluation.

Energy: The West Africa Energy Program (WAEP) benefited from ASSESS evaluations, incorporating findings and recommendations from the evaluation of the West Africa Energy Portfolio (2009–2014) conducted in 2015, as well as the review of the West Africa Energy Program Theory of Change (TOC) conducted in 2018.

Trade and Investment: The West Africa Trade and Investment Hub (WATIH) and Africa Trade and Investment (ATI) programs were similarly influenced, with WATIH's design being informed by the outcomes of a Trade Hub learning event in Abuja in 2017 facilitated by ASSESS. Meanwhile, ATI's design drew on potential insights from the Bridge Analysis and the Private Sector Engagement Analysis conducted by ASSESS prior to the development of the RDCS.

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[48] This indicator measures the percentage of programs/projects in USAID/WA REGO's portfolio whose design, planning, modification, or adjustments (including mid-course corrections) were informed by evidence from ASSESS activities—not just evaluations and studies. This broader mandate led to the current formulation of the indicator. The previous formulation was "percentage of new project designs that are informed by ASSESS evaluations and studies."

[49] This indicator measures the proportion of approved evaluation and study reports for which USAID has taken actions in relation to implementing recommendations. The methodology employed for this survey involved qualitative inputs with structured questionnaires from selected respondents (mainly AORs and CORs and team leads in charge of commissioning the evaluation or assessment), primarily through key informant interviews (see Text Box 2 for more detail).

Local Works: Within the Local Works Portfolio, "Connect and Learn for Sustainable Associations" (CLOSA) actively incorporated insights from a local works co-creation event organized by ASSESS, which significantly informed the design of this community-driven initiative. Similarly, the West Africa Private Healthcare Federation's "Journey Towards Sustainability" (J2Su) drew on the outcomes of a Local Works co-creation event facilitated by ASSESS, actively shaping the design of this Local Works activity to ensure its relevance and sustainability.

Education: In the realm of education, the USAID/Ghana Low-Cost Private Schools (LCPS) activity was actively informed by the results of the LCPS assessment conducted for the USAID/Ghana Education Office in 2017. This approach ensured that the design of the activity was grounded in a thorough understanding of the educational landscape and needs within the Ghanaian context.

Source: ASSESS team, based on the results of the 2021 and 2023 ASSESS surveys that were conducted to measure Outcome Indicators 1 and 1.1. December 2023.

2.4. Key Factors That Contributed to or Detracted From Results

2.4.1. Contributed to

- *PASA*: ASSESS was a PASA, not a standard USAID contract or grant, which increased its ability to respond to ad hoc requests from USAID/WA REGO that were added after the annual work plan for the fiscal year had been approved.
- *Consultant Bank:* The PASA's strategy for building a "bank" of qualified consultants made it easier to identify and mobilize them in a timely manner.
- *CA Manual:* The development of a comprehensive CA manual by ASSESS to guide the implementation of evaluations and studies ensured consistency and adherence to USAID standards. It also set realistic expectations between ASSESS and USAID on CA workflow and timelines. This clear guidance likely contributed to the successful completion and approval of the majority of the 29[50] reports.
- *Participatory Research*: The ASSESS PASA's commitment to ensuring that all of their studies were executed in a participatory manner ensured that all of the stakeholders (at all levels) were involved in the research and briefed on the research results, which facilitated their access to information and the finalization and use of the research results.
- *Collaborating, Learning, and Adapting (CLA) Link:* This participatory process was greatly strengthened by the fact that the ASSESS PASA included a budget line for post-evaluation and post-assessment CLA learning events that complemented the normal debriefing process.
- *Solid SOWs:* The ASSESS Technical Team's collaborative work with the USAID Requesting Office[51] and proactive efforts to seek clarity when SOWs were unclear fostered effective communication. This collaborative approach: 1) enhanced the quality and relevance of evaluations and studies, aligning them with the specific needs and expectations of USAID as well as the local stakeholders; and 2) decreased the need for frequent revisions of the multiple revisions of the final reports.
- *Editorial Support*: Another factor that contributed to the PASA's successful record for this sub-IR was ASSESS' willingness to provide editorial backup to ensure high-quality editing and formatting of the reports to meet USAID/WA REGO standards.

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[50] This figure includes the evaluations, assessments, and applied research report on COVID-19 (Table 3).
[51] This refers to the specific USAID/WA office or team commissioning the activity.

2.4.2. Detracted From

Two of the chief factors that detracted from the efficiency and efficacy of the PASA in achieving the result envisioned for Sub-IR 1 were:

- *Short Notice and Delays:* The short notice and delays in commissioning activities planned for in the annual work plan (which changed start-up dates) for many evaluations and assessments made it difficult (in several cases) to find qualified consultants or to field qualified consultants that the PASA had identified; and
- *Poor Quality Reporting*: The poor quality of some of the reports from a well-executed evaluation or assessment was a key factor that detracted from results under this sub-IR.

ASSESS addressed these issues by a series of mechanisms identified above, including having a "bank" of qualified consultants as well as funding the costs associated with a qualified international editor who was familiar with USAID's quality standards and formatting rules to backstop the expert teams on the final production of the report.

2.5. Conclusions

2.5.1. Conclusion 1[52]

There is clear evidence from the PASA's quarterly and semi-annual reports, internal records, and two post-evaluation/assessment surveys that: 1) ASSESS achieved or overachieved the revised targets that USAID/WA REGO set for the PASA's Sub-IR 1 activities; and that the successful achievement of these activities (Table 3) 2) resulted in a high percentage (92 percent) of the studies resulting in actions that were either taken or implemented on USAID/WA REGO's new and existing programs (Table 4).

2.5.2. Conclusion 2[53]

The 29 evaluations and studies conducted have served as valuable references for learning and knowledge sharing. By conducting these evaluations, assessments, and analyses, ASSESS contributed to a holistic understanding of various development aspects. One of the best indicators of this broader institutional impact is the PASA's quantitative and qualitative evidence that documents the extensive integration of findings and recommendations from ASSESS evaluations and studies into the design of multiple USAID programs across different thematic areas, which highlights the tangible impact the studies had on strategic planning and decision making (Table 4; Text Box 5).

2.4.3. Conclusion 3[54]

One unintended contribution of the ASSESS PASA's Sub-IR 1 activities has been to demonstrate some of the creative ways that USAID programs have contributed to the short- and longer-term goals of USAID's localization agenda by:

- The PASA's commitment to hiring fully qualified consultants and giving priority to consultants based in West Africa, which enhanced their experience and familiarity with USG institutions, procedures, and USAID programming;

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[52] Cross-cutting Question 1 in the SOW for the preparation of the ASSESS Final Report asked: "To what extent has the ASSESS PASA achieved its purpose and goals, IR, and sub-IRs?"
[53] Cross-cutting Question 2 in the SOW for the preparation of the ASESS Final Report asked: "To what extent has the ASSESS PASA addressed capacity needs of USAID/WA REGO and USAID-funded activities that interacted with ASSESS?"
[54] Cross-cutting Question 3 in the SOW for the preparation of the ASSESS Final Report asked: "What unintended contribution has the ASSESS PASA's approach and activities achieved relative to indirectly supporting USAID's localization agenda, which was announced during the last two years of the project?"

- Relying on a local university-based center (KNUST-BIRD) to manage the PASA activities; and
- Codeveloping a new generation of localization-friendly standard operating procedures, tools, and planning processes that many of USAID's principal partners found useful and continue to use to execute joint programming with USAID.

3.0. Sub-IR 2: Availability of Information for Decision Making Increased

The activities under this ASSESS component were designed to:
- Ensure dissemination of information to USAID and its regional partners; and
- Provide USAID/WA REGO with "added tools that encourage meaningful space to 1) create, innovate, and learn from the evolving trends in economic development and subsequently; and 2) make programmatic revisions, as appropriate, to improve its development impact across West Africa."[55]

3.1. Targets

In the original agreement, ASSESS was tasked with:
- Sharing "successful approaches, challenges, and lessons learned for economic growth interventions in the sub-region" by[56]:
- Supporting conferences, workshops, and webinars and providing "logistic support" for USAID/WA activities related to "training, strategic planning, donor coordination, and project-specific activities, including translation and interpretation services for meetings, technical documents, USAID/WA website pages, outreach materials, and publications in the main languages and/or dialects used in locations of USAID assistance."

FY 2014–FY 2016: The initial focus of these activities was on the organization of post-evaluation learning events for each of the ASSESS-managed and non-ASSESS–managed USAID/WA REGO project evaluations (Table 5).

FY 2016–FY 2017: A critical turning point occurred when USAID/WA REGO requested ASSESS to assist them with the organization of a series of brown-bag meetings to increase USAID staff's understanding of the major West Africa regional institutions that the USAID/WA mission was working with, such as the West Africa Economic and Monetary Union (also known by its French acronym UEMOA, or *Union Economique et Monétaire Ouest Africaine*) in FY 2017 (Table 5).

FY 2018–FY 2023: The successful execution of the learning events and brown-bag meetings in FY 2017 led USAID/WA REGO to request ASSESS to expand its Sub-IR 2 activities to include support for: 1) a monthly e-newsletter for its regional partners (local IPs, regional organizations, and USAID/WA REGO and USAID bilateral staff in all the targeted countries); 2) regional conferences and roundtables; 3) co-creation events; 4) training workshops in MEL and communication for USAID/WA REGO's IPs; and 5) a series of strategy planning retreats for USAID/WA REGO staff. These activities were in addition to the PASA's continued support for post-evaluation learning events (Table 5).

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[55] USAID. 2014. USAID-USDA ASSESS PASA No. AID-624-P-14-0004. Washington, DC: USAID. Pg. 13.
[56] USAID. 2014. USAID-USDA ASSESS PASA No. AID-624-P-14-0004. Washington, DC: USAID. Pg. 14.

Table 5. Evolution of ASSESS Sub-IR 2 Support for Dissemination Workshops and Learning Events, FY 2014–FY 2024 (bold = numbers for specific categories; italicized = numbers for subcategories)

Category of Support	FY 14	FY 15	FY 16	FY 17	FY 18	FY 19	FY 20	FY 21	FY 22	FY 23	FY 24	LOA
1. Learning Events												
1.A.[57] Post-Evaluation Learning Events	0	2	1	3	1	0	0	0	0	5	0	**12**
1.A.1. For ASSESS-led evaluations	0	1	1	2	1	0	0	0	0	5	0	*10*
1.A.2. For non-Assess– led evaluations	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	*2*
1.B. Post-Assessment Learning Events	0	0	2	3	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	**6**
1.B.1. For ASSESS-led assessments	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	*1*
1.B.2. For non-ASSESS–led assessments	0	0	2	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	*5*
1.C. Learning Event for ASSESS-Led Baseline Study (for USDA FFPr initiative)	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	**1**
2. Brown-Bags for USAID/WA REGO Staff on Regional Institutions	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	**3**
3. Regional Conferences and Roundtables	0	0	0	0	2	1	0	2	1	1	0	**7**
3.A. Conferences	0	0	0	0	2	1	0	1	0	0	0	*4*
3.B. Roundtables	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	0	*3*
4. Co-Creation Events	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	1	1	**4**
5. Training Workshops for USAID/WA REGO IPs	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	7	0	**8**
5.A. Communication	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	3	0	*4*
5.B. M&E	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	0	*4*
6. USAID/WA REGO Team Retreats and Strategy Sessions	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**1**	**0**	**0**	**1**	**4**	**0**	**0**	**6**
7. USAID/WA REGO Newsletter					11	11	12	10	12	12	3	**71**

* Starting in FY 2021, the USAID/WA REGO Development Outreach Communications (DOCs) team managed the subscription database of the newsletter. In FY 2024, when the PASA closed, the estimated circulation was to approximately 2,000 recipients.
Source: Output Indicator 2.2, Annex I and Annex VI for the full list of events.

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[57] The addition of sub-categories to the numbering (1.A, 1.B, etc.) is added by the team to make it easier to cross-reference to the text in the final report. This numbering system was not used during the PASA's 's routine reporting to USAID.

3.2. Achieved

Learning Events (Activities 1–6, Table 5): ASSESS achieved 90 percent (47 of 52) of the activity targets on dissemination workshops and learning events, but 100 percent of the events for which the actual funding was approved.[58] These 47 events and workshops included (Table 5):

- Nineteen learning events;
- Three brown-bag meetings;
- Seven regional conferences and roundtables;
- Four co-creation events;
- Eight training workshops in communication, monitoring, evaluation, and learning for USAID/WA REGO IPs across the region; and
- Six USAID/WA REGO team retreats.

These events were held either in person, virtually, or as a hybrid, allowing a range of stakeholders to collaborate to sufficiently resource the generation, synthesis, translation, dissemination, and uptake of evidence needed to address the Agency Learning Agenda questions.[59]

USAID/WA REGO Newsletter (Activity 7, Table 5): In addition to this, the PASA executed 71 editions of a monthly USAID/WA REGO newsletter between FY 2018 and FY 2024.[60]

3.2.1. Category 1: Learning Events

ASSESS conducted a total of 19 learning events,[61] 17 (89 percent) of which were conducted in support of USAID/WA REGO activities and two (11 percent) for other USG offices such as USDA and the USAID/Ghana bilateral mission (Table 5, Category 1).

3.2.1.1. Category 1.A: Post-Evaluation Learning Events (Table 5): These learning events aimed to share findings and recommendations of completed evaluations with USAID and its regional stakeholders in a way that engendered learning to improve future programming. Although 100 percent of the ASSESS-led evaluations held debriefings at the mission, only nine[62] of the 13 evaluations conducted by ASSESS (69 percent) had follow-on learning events due to: 1) the report review and finalization process being delayed; or 2) the report being approved but the funding for the learning event not being approved. One of the completed evaluations (i.e., evaluation of the USAID/WA WASH portfolio) had two learning events in two countries (i.e., Benin and Côte d'Ivoire).

3.2.1.2. Category 1.B. Post-Assessment Learning Events: ASSESS conducted six post-assessment learning events, five (86 percent) of which were related to non-ASSESS–led assessments and one (14 percent) focused on an assessment conducted by ASSESS.

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[58] The other five (that did not get executed) were events for which the preceding activity such as evaluation or assessment was not funded or completed in time for the event.

[59] USAID. 2022. Agency Learning Agenda: FY 2022–2026. November 2022. Pg. 5. https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/2023-03/Agency%20Learning%20Agenda%20%2801-05-2023%29.pdf.

[60] USAID/WA REGO requested ASSESS to develop monthly newsletters in 2017. ASSESS produced the first newsletter in the first quarter of FY 2018, which USAID approved and disseminated to stakeholders.

[61] These events covered: 1) 11 ASSESS-led evaluations; 2) two non-ASSESS–led evaluations; 3) one ASSESS-led assessment; and 4) five non-ASSESS–led assessments (Table 5).

[62] The four evaluations with no learning events include: 1) the mid-term evaluation of the West Africa Fertilizer Program (WAFP); 2) the mid-term performance evaluation of the West Africa Biodiversity and Climate Change (WABICC) Program/Sierra Leone Coastal Landscape Complex; 3) the final evaluation of the West Africa Food Security Partnership (WAFSP) Program; and 4) the ex-post evaluation of Mali Out-of-School Youth project (*Projet d'Appui aux Jeunes Entrepreneurs*).

- Four of the five non-ASSESS–led assignments focused on the dissemination of information from a United States Geological Survey (USGS)[63] assessment or mapping of Land Use Land Cover (LULC) dynamics and climate change in West Africa (2011–2015);
- The fifth non-ASSESS–led post-assessment learning event focused on the Sanitation Services Delivery (SSD) project[64]; and
- The sixth was conducted as a follow-on to the Low-Cost Private Schools (LCPS) assessment conducted for USAID/Ghana in FY 2019.

3.2.1.3. Category 1.C: Learning Event for USDA FFPr Initiative[65]: Following a successful implementation of the baseline survey for two USDA FFPr projects in Ghana—the Ghana Poultry Project[66] and the AMPLIFIES Ghana Project[67]—USAID/WA REGO approved ASSESS to support USDA to organize a learning event for all of the key stakeholders in FY 2016. This event gave the key stakeholders the opportunity to discuss and deliberate on key contextual issues prior to commencing implementation of the FFPr projects whose objectives were to address non-competitiveness of Ghana's poultry sector, resulting mainly from high production costs and limited availability of quality inputs.

3.2.2. Category 2: Brown-Bags for USAID/WA REGO Staff on Regional Institutions

ASSESS was also tasked with organizing monthly brown-bag meetings that were designed to enhance USAID/WA's understanding of the mandate and operations of 11 of the key West Africa regional institutions (Table 5). The brown-bags were designed to be in-person meetings at the USAID/WA regional mission in Accra, which required that the lead presenters on the various institutions travel to make the presentation. Although targeted at USAID/WA REGO staff, the meetings were opened to other offices within the mission, including the Regional Health Office (RHO) and the Regional Program Office. Due to a shift in USAID/WA REGO priorities (occasioned by a change in USAID/WA REGO leadership), only three of the brown-bags were supported.[68]

3.2.3. Category 3: Regional Conferences and Roundtables

ASSESS supported USAID/WA REGO's organization of seven regional conferences and roundtables (Table 5).

3.2.3.1. Category 3.A: Regional Conferences: Between FY 2014 and FY 2019, ASSESS was tasked with organizing four regional conferences focused on addressing cross-cutting issues to advance USG initiatives toward promoting economic growth and sustainable development in the region (Text Box 6).

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[63] The USGS is a science bureau within the U.S. Department of the Interior. The USGS provides science about the natural hazards that threaten lives and livelihoods; the water, energy, minerals, and other natural resources we rely on; the health of our ecosystems and environment; and the impacts of climate and land-use change (https://www.usgs.gov/faqs/what-does-usgs-united-states-geological-survey-do).

[64] This learning event was organized in FY 2016 and is different from the post-evaluation learning event conducted in 2017 to share findings and recommendations from the SSD project mid-term evaluation.

[65] The USDA FFPr Program helps developing countries and emerging democracies modernize and strengthen their agricultural sectors. U.S. agricultural commodities donated to recipient countries are sold on the local market, and the proceeds are used to support agricultural, economic, or infrastructure development programs (https://fas.usda.gov/programs/food-progress).

[66] The GPP was implemented by ACDI/VOCA.

[67] The AMPLIFIES Ghana project was implemented by the ASA.

[68] The agencies that were represented in the three brown-bags include: 1) the West African Power Pool, 2) the West African Economic and Monetary Union (also known by its French acronym UEMOA), and 3) the West and Central African Council for Agricultural Research and Development (CORAF/WECARD). The eight regional organizations that were tentatively scheduled but not approved include: 4) the Mano River Union, 5) Sahel G5, 6) the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), 7) the Permanent Interstate Committee for Drought Control in the Sahel (CILSS), 8) West African Health Organization (WAHO), 9) West Africa Network for Peacebuilding (WANEP), 10) ECOWAS Regional Electricity Regulatory Authority (ERERA), and 11) the ECOWAS Centre for Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency (ECREEE).

Text Box 6. Regional Conferences Facilitated by the USAID/WA ASSESS PASA FY 2014–FY 2024

Fall Armyworm Regional Workshop (FY 2018): In support of regional measures to address the threat of fall armyworm (FAW) to regional food security, ASSESS supported USAID/WA REGO and its international and regional partners, including the International Maize and Wheat Improvement Center (CIMMYT), ECOWAS, and the Institute of Tropical Agriculture (IITA), to organize a regional training and awareness generation workshop on FAW pest management in Cotonou, Benin. The regional workshop aimed at building technical capacity in the West Africa region in integrated pest management (IPM)-based FAW management and had in attendance over 90 participants drawn from National Agriculture Research institutions, National Plant Protection Offices (NPPOs), Feed the Future (FtF) IPs and coordinators, and representatives from key institutional partners implementing an FAW response at scale. ASSESS provided logistic support for organizing the workshop. This included facilitating travel, managing participant confirmations, and providing administrative assistance for the meeting and providing logistic support for a follow-on ECOWAS Task Force meeting for member states.

Power Africa 2018 Summit: ASSESS supported the USAID/WA REGO Energy Team to organize the 2018 Power Africa[69] West Africa Regional Summit in Dakar, Senegal, with the participation of 15 experts from USAID missions in Senegal and Liberia, Côte d'Ivoire, USAID/WA, USAID/Washington, U.S. Department of Commerce, and partner institutions such as the Tony Blair Institute (TBI), Power Africa Transactions and Reforms Program (PATRP), and Deloitte, a consulting firm. The broad objective of the summit was to create a platform for USAID/WA, Power Africa points of contact (POCs) in West Africa, and other Power Africa team members to exchange knowledge, brainstorm on key issues, and share strategies toward the implementation of the Power Africa initiative. Among other outcomes, the summit led to the generation of critical points, including useful and actionable suggestions or proposals to strengthen the implementation and enhance the achievement of the Power Africa objectives within West Africa. ASSESS provided logistic support for the event.

The18th AGOA Forum and Celebrating AGOA Event: The African Growth and Opportunity Act[70] (AGOA) (Public Law 106-200) makes provision for the establishment of a United States–Sub-Saharan Africa Trade and Economic Cooperation Forum ("AGOA Forum"). ASSESS supported[71] the USAID/WA REGO Trade Team to organize the 18th AGOA Forum in 2019 in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire, with 78 participants in attendance. On the margins of the AGOA Forum, ASSESS assisted USAID/WA REGO to organize a media-friendly evening event dubbed "Celebrating AGOA" to highlight "Made in West Africa" products.[72] Fifteen businesses spanning the apparel, specialty food, and cosmetics industries showcased products—being exported or with the potential of being exported to the U.S. market—to regional and international value chain actors.

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[69] Power Africa is a USG-led partnership, coordinated by USAID, that brings together the collective resources of over 200 public and private sector partners to double access to electricity in sub-Saharan Africa (https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/2023-07/Power-Africa-Fact-Sheet-English-07102023.pdf).

[70] The African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA) is a U.S. Trade Act, enacted on May 18, 2000. AGOA has since been renewed to 2025. The legislation significantly enhances market access to the United States for qualifying Sub-Saharan African (SSA) countries.

[71] The support ASSESS provided includes: 1) managing event logistics, including securing event venue and ensuring simultaneous translation (English to French and vice versa); 2) managing exhibitor participation, including registration and set-up; 3) developing communication materials for the event, including a montage of videos and photos of exhibitors and a brochure of company profiles; and 4) managing travel for three consultants (i.e., the AGOA trade specialist, U.S. customs lawyer, and the senior trade advisor) to participate in the event.

[72] The products showcased included: 1) specialty foods such as chocolate products, dried fruits, nuts, ice cream, and juices; 2) clothing such as fashion clothing made by local designers displaying local wax print; and 3) cosmetics such as skin and hair products produced from local raw materials like shea, cocoa butter, coconut oil, and moringa.

> *Local Works Solicitation Conference (2021):* In FY 2021, ASSESS supported the USAID/WA Agriculture Team to organize this event as a follow-on to the Local Works[73] Co-Creation Workshop (see Chapter 3.2.4). The event provided opportunity for shortlisted local associations to seek further clarification on the Local Works Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO), including the grant application process and subsequent award process. ASSESS hosted the event on its Zoom platform, and provided simultaneous interpretation services, notes taking, and translation of documents from French to English and vice versa.
>
> **Source:** ASSESS team, based on PASA records. December 2023.

3.2.3.2. Category 3.B: Regional Roundtables: Starting in FY 2021, the USAID/WA REGO Trade Team requested the ASSESS PASA's assistance in implementing a series of three roundtable discussions.[74] These events were held virtually on the Zoom platform and featured a compressed agenda of not more than two hours using experts who were recruited and managed by ASSESS (Text Box 7).

> **Text Box 7. Regional Roundtables Facilitated by the ASSESS PASA, FY 2014–FY 2024**
>
> The first roundtable in the series—the *USAID/West Africa Regional Roundtable on Private Equity, and Investment Transaction*—was implemented in FY 2021. This event was a presentation on the elements of private equity investment, shifting trends of capital flows in Africa, and the potential impact on development objectives.
>
> The second event, *West Africa Regional Roundtable Discussion on Localization and Decolonization*, discussed a challenging topic that had a strong impact on the Trade Team's current activity design for regional engagement.
>
> The third roundtable discussion had a specific focus on *Localization on Progress through Partnership.* This event brought together participants from USAID missions in West Africa and local firms and business entities to deliberate on the increased need for local partners' involvement in the design of the next generation of activities to be carried out by the Trade Team. It also provided participants with increased new possibilities for local partners' involvement in key areas such as health, education/capacity enhancement, and a practical example of business climate improvement.
>
> **Source:** ASSESS team, based on PASA records. December2023.

3.2.4. Category 4: Co-Creation Events

Between FY 2014 and FY 2023, ASSESS supported USAID to organize four co-creation[75] events (Table 5, Category 4). Three of the co-creation events were organized for USAID/WA REGO, while the remaining co-creation event was organized for USAID/Ghana (Text Box 8).

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[73] Local Works is USAID's flagship locally led development program. Locally led development means local people take the lead in the development process, including priority setting, decision making, management, and more. Through Local Works, USAID missions have more time and greater freedom to pursue locally led programming and innovative ways of working (https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/2022-05/USAID_Local_Works_Fact_Sheet.pdf).

[74] The roundtables started as a way of USAID trying to reconnect or continue engagement with its partners amid the initial travel ban and other restrictions that prevented in-person meetings during the COVID-19 pandemic. Based on the successful organization and outcomes of the initial engagements, the approach was maintained even after the COVID-19 pandemic ended.

[75] Co-creation is an intentional, collaborative design approach that brings people together to collectively produce a mutually valued outcome, using a participatory process that assumes some degree of shared power and decision making (https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/2023-01/co-creation_toolkit_interactive_guide_-_march_2022%20%283%29.pdf).

Text Box 8. Co-Creation Events Facilitated by the ASSESS PASA, FY 2021–FY 2024

FY 2021: ASSESS organized two co-creation events in FY 2021. Given the prevailing COVID-19 pandemic at the time, both events were held virtually via the Zoom platform. The first co-creation event was organized for the USAID/Ghana Education office, which focused on Accountability in Education Systems in Sub-Saharan Africa, while the second was organized for USAID/WA REGO with a focus on Local Works. The Local Works co-creation event brought together participants from USAID missions and client missions from Benin, Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Côte d'Ivoire, The Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Liberia, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, and Sierra Leone to discuss building sustainable associations for local works.

FY 2023–FY 2024: Following a successful learning event on the PAIRED final evaluation, ASSESS assisted the USAID/WA Agriculture Team to organize a co-creation event in FY 2023 for stakeholders in Dakar, Senegal, in support of USAID/WA's future seed and agri-input programming.

In FY 2024, ASSESS supported the USAID/WA Agriculture Team to organize a co-creation event in Accra, Ghana, for USAID staff, members of the Global Shea Alliance, National Shea associations, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and experts in shea production and marketing to explore the key challenges and solutions in improving livelihoods of women shea collectors and addressing broader shea supply chain challenges in the West Africa region.

Source: ASSESS team, based on PASA records. December 2023.

3.2.5. Category 5: Training Workshops for USAID/WA REGO IPs

Between FY 2014 and FY 2023, ASSESS organized eight training workshops for USAID/WA REGO's IPs to build their capacity in MEL and communication (Table 5, Categories 5.A and 5.B). Four of the training workshops focused on MEL, while the remaining four centered on communication (Table 5). The communication workshops aimed to build capacity of IPs to improve their communication on USAID's programming across the sub-region. ASSESS organized the first Communication Workshop in FY 2019[76] in Accra, Ghana, while the remaining communication training workshops were held virtually on Zoom in FY 2023. Refer to Chapter 4.2.4 of this report for details on the MEL training workshops.

3.2.6. Category 6: USAID/WA REGO Team Retreats and Strategic Meetings

From FY 2014 to FY 2023, ASSESS assisted USAID/WA REGO to organize five USAID/WA REGO team retreats and one strategic planning meeting (Table 5, Category 6).
- The strategic planning meeting, which was held in Accra in FY 2018, supported the USAID/WA Agriculture Team's development of the West Africa Global Food Security Strategy (GFSS) Regional Plan[77] (2019–2024).
- The five retreats supported by ASSESS included: 1) two retreats for the USAID/WA Trade Team (FY 2021 and FY 2022), 2) one retreat for the USAID/WA Agriculture Team (FY 2022), and 3) two retreats for the wider USAID/WA REGO team (FY 2022).

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[76] The FY 2019 Communication Workshop was organized as the first in the series. The plan was to organize the remaining workshops in FY 2020. With the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, these trainings were postponed. ASSESS conducted a training needs assessment in FY 2021, which informed the planning and organization of the follow-on virtual training workshops in FY 2023.

[77] The Feed the Future West Africa Regional Plan, covering 2019–2024, presents a five-year strategy for West Africa to achieve the initiative's goal of reducing poverty, hunger, and malnutrition. This plan reflects an evidence-based, integrated, interagency, and regional approach to pursuing the three objectives of sustainable agriculture-led growth, resilience, and nutrition while positioning the region and its countries to become self-reliant (https://www.feedthefuture.gov/resource/feed-the-future-west-africa-regional-plan/).

3.2.7. Category 7: REGO Monthly Newsletter

In FY 2017, USAID/WA REGO commissioned ASSESS to develop a monthly e-newsletter that focused on sharing information about the regional institutions and projects being supported by the USAID/WA Regional Mission. Between October 2017 and December 2023, the ASSESS team produced 71 digital editions of the newsletter that were circulated to over 2,000 USAID staff across the agency, IPs, and ambassadors across West Africa by the last edition in FY 2024.

3.3. Early Evidence of Results/Impact

There is strong quantitative evidence from the post-event surveys[78] that the project conducted with a full or representative sample of participants that ASSESS:
- Achieved or overachieved the stakeholders' expectations for the events (Text Box 9); and that
- The events increased the "availability of information for decision making" as originally envisioned (Figure 2, Chapter 1).

Text Box 9. Sample Stakeholder Events on ASSESS Events Under Sub-IR 2

- Ninety-eight percent of the workshop participants ranked the three-day Virtual Communication workshop positively (61 percent "excellent" and 37 percent "good") for all three modules, which were held on different days.[79]
- Using a similar methodology, 98 percent of the participants who completed the assessment for the three-day Virtual MEL workshop ranked the workshop positively (71 percent of participants rated the workshop as "excellent" and 27 percent "good").[80]
- Ninety-two percent of the participants who completed the final assessment form (69 percent of the participants in the workshop) for the FAW Management workshop either agreed or strongly agreed that their expectations of the event were fully met, and 97 percent either agreed or strongly agreed that the FAW Management workshop was aligned well to their institutional needs and priorities.[81]
- Sixty-six percent of the participants who completed the final event assessment form for the Africa Centre of Excellence (ACE) learning event on SSD rated the learning event as "high" or "very high" in terms of the extent to which their expectations were met; 80 percent rated as either "high" or "very high" the relevance of the event to their institutions; and 89 percent rated as "high" or "very high" the overall usefulness of this learning event.[82]
- Eighty-two percent of the participants who completed the final assessment of the ASSESS-managed Learning Event—Ten Years of USAID Support to the Cotton Sector in West and Central Africa—either agreed or strongly agreed that the outcomes of the learning event were relevant for the cotton sector. One participant noted: "The application of these results will increase productivity and make cotton growing sustainable." Another noted: "If the recommendations of this event are implemented, several constraints in the cotton sector will be lifted." Eighty-five percent of the respondents either agreed or strongly agreed that the learning

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[78] This refers to the evaluations conducted at the end of events where participants complete forms to provide their feedback on various aspects of the events, including the extent to which their expectations were met, what aspects of the event worked well, what aspects could be improved, etc.

[79] ASSESS. 2023. Virtual Workshops on Communication. Draft. Accra, Ghana: ASSESS for USAID/WA REGO. August 2023. Pg. 6.

[80] ASSESS. 2023. Virtual Workshops on Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL). Draft. Accra, Ghana: ASSESS for USAID/WA REGO. October 2023. Pg. 7.

[81] Barbara Arthur, Nana Fredua-Agyeman, and Meimuna Diakite. 2018. Participants' Feedback Report. Global Experts Train West African Practitioners on Fall Armyworm Management, a Critical Global Food Security Threat in Africa. Cotonou, Benin. Accra, Ghana: ASSESS for the International Institute of Tropical Agriculture (IITA) and USAID/WA REGO. February 13–25, 2018. Pp. 5–6.

[82] ASSESS. 2016. ACE (Africa Centre of Excellence) Learning Event. Sanitation Service Delivery (SSD): Making Market Work for the Poor. Accra, Ghana: ASSESS for USAID/WA REGO. September 14, 2016. Pg. 13.

event objectives aligned well to their institutional needs and priorities; and 88 percent indicated that the working groups created great discussions among experts and produced the expected goals. Generally, participants were of the opinion that the breakout sessions were interactive and led to actionable recommendations, which when implemented can help address some of the bottlenecks and constraints of the sector. Sample comments included: "The working groups provided important results" and "Concrete and relevant proposals to improve the competitiveness of African cotton."[83]

Source: ASSESS learning event final reports that are cited in the footnotes for each above events.

3.4. Key Factors That Contributed to or Detracted From Results

3.4.1. Contributed to

Pre-Planning
- *Flexible and Responsive Approach*: ASSESS was a PASA, not a standard USAID contract or grant, which facilitated its ability to:
  – Shift the activities under this sub-IR from the original focus on post-evaluation and post-assessment events to a much wider array of learning events that responded to USAID's evolving needs; and
  – Embrace a much wider group of stakeholders (e.g., staff associated with the major regional organizations that USAID/WA REGO was working with).
- *Collaboration With Partners:* Frequent meetings with the USAID requesting offices allowed ASSESS to understand the scope of the services requested. These expectations were further clarified by the PASA's insistence on co-developing (with the requesting offices):
  – A "Response SOW" for each event and committing it for review by the requesting office before moving forward with pre-planning; and
  – An event determination checklist for determining if an event could be successfully carried out within a given time frame and the conditions that must be met to guarantee quality deliverables.
- *Team Approach*: The entire ASSESS team contributed toward the planning and execution of the PASA's knowledge management activities. These planning meetings and simulations of the actual event gave team members opportunities to explore and share ideas on how best to implement sessions and workshops.
- *Experienced Consultants*: The identification and recruitment of experienced consultants and facilitators ensured that new trends and global practices (like those afforded by new conferencing platforms such as Zoom, Webex, Microsoft Teams, Google Meets, and HopIn) were introduced to participants during events.
- *Participatory Planning Process, Checklists, and Simulations*:
  – The PASA's commitment to early planning and the involvement of all of the key stakeholders in the training and/or conference and/or roundtable events helped facilitate shared understanding and buy-in to the events. This planning process was strengthened by the PASA's development and extensive use of checklists, templates, and forms to facilitate better tracking of the planning processes.
  – This included a "Responsibility Assignment Matrix" (RAM) that was used for all events to ensure a complete breakdown of all tasks related to events and for tracking progress over the implementation timeline.

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[83] ASSESS. 2018. Learning Event Report: Ten Years of USAID Support to the Cotton Sector in West and Central Africa. Accra, Ghana: ASSESS for USAID/WA REGO. March 20–21 2018. Annex I.

- In most cases ASSESS organized a series of simulations and dry runs with the requesting USAID partner just prior to the event to identify any potential glitches that might have been overlooked in pre-planning.

Content and Management
- *Interactive and Engaging Virtual Workshops:* ASSESS prioritized interactive and engaging delivery to keep virtual events as close to in-person as possible and enhanced the outcomes of co-creation engagements and activities. These workshops were planned to be interactive and engaging.
  - Participants were encouraged to share experiences and ask questions through the use of:
    - o Virtual parking lots to collate questions and comments for facilitators and ensure that these questions were answered either during or after the project; and
    - o Icebreakers to prevent participant fatigue and apathy during long sessions.

Post-Event Assessment
- *Stakeholder Feedback:* The PASA was committed to 1) conducting a rigorous post-evaluation/assessment of most of its events; and 2) distilling this information into a final event report to the USAID office that requested the event (Text Box 10).[84] This type of structured feedback gave the ASSESS team and USAID/WA REGO an opportunity to refine the flow and content of the sessions as they progressed.

Text Box 10. Best Practice: Sample Table of Contents for ASSESS Training Workshop Reports to USAID

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[84] In most cases the ASSESS team created a Google form to assess the workshops, gather feedback from participants, and elicit reflections and opinions about the virtual workshop experience. The first part of the assessment questions focused on the general planning and content of the workshop—whether the workshop met their expectations, organization of content, flow of content, facilitator's knowledge in the topic, quality of instruction, whether the knowledge learned can be applied, and whether adequate time was provided for questions and discussion (interactivity). The second part gave participants the opportunity to rate the virtual workshop and share comments and recommendations to improve future workshops.

Source: ASSESS. 2023. Virtual Workshops on Communication. Draft. Accra, Ghana: ASSESS for USAID/WA REGO. August 2023.

3.4.2. Detracted From

Three of the key factors that detracted from the efficiency and efficacy of the PASA in achieving Sub-IR 2 were:

- *Delays:* Delays related to the fact that an assessment or evaluation was not completed and/or not approved on time (for many reasons, including poor quality), which resulted in the post-evaluation or post-assessment learning event being postponed or canceled.
- *Short Notice:* Short notices and delays in commissioning activities planned for in the annual work plan, which changed the start dates for many of the evaluations and assessments, made it difficult in several cases to find qualified consultants or to field the qualified consultants that the PASA had identified before the delay.
- *Unsuccessful Consultancies:* The consultants hired to undertake activities sometimes reneged on their contract obligations, thereby delaying activity implementation and forcing ASSESS team members to work extra hard to cover gaps.

ASSESS addressed these issues by a series of mechanisms identified above, including: 1) having a "bank" of qualified consultants; as well as 2) funding the cost of a qualified international editor who was familiar with USAID's quality standards and formatting rules to backstop the expert teams on the final production of the report.

3.5. Conclusions

3.5.1. Conclusion 1[85]

There is clear quantitative and qualitative evidence from the PASA's post-event reports, annual work plans, and end-of-year reports that the ASSESS PASA:

- *Events*: Achieved or overachieved every one of the revised annual targets that the USAID/WA regional mission set for the six categories of events;
- *Newsletter*: Successfully executed a seventh category of activity—the design, pilot testing, and initial scale-up of the first USAID/WA REGO newsletter, which is slated to continue with support from a new follow-on project; and
- *Results:* The collective impact of these seven broad categories of events contributed to the project's IR-level goal of increasing the "body of knowledge and evidence for improved resource allocation, policy advocacy, and program planning" (Figure 2).

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[85] Cross-cutting Question 1 in the SOW for the preparation of the ASSESS Final Report asked: "To what extent has the ASSESS PASA achieved its purpose and goals, IR, and sub-IRs?"

3.5.2. Conclusion 2[86]

There is also evidence from the semi-annual and quarterly reports that the ASSESS PASA's Sub-IR 2 activities were effective in addressing USAID/WA REGO's most pressing capacity strengthening needs, which evolved over the PASA's LOA by:
- *Improved Communication:* Co-developing a series of events and a monthly newsletter that strengthened USAID/WA REGO's communication with and understanding of their key partners' roles, specific projects, as well as the wider development landscape;
- *Capacity Strengthening*: Strengthening the capacity of the IPs to communicate and report data with clarity that complies with USAID standards and international best practice;
- *Regional Communication*: Strengthening the USAID/WA REGO teams' and IPs' access to information (and support) from some of the most important sub-regional institutions that support similar types of programing;
- *COVID-19 Mitigation*: Helping USAID/WA REGO mitigate the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on its projects by facilitating the exchange of best practice (between regional partners) and the design of new programs that could incorporate these best practices; and
- *Strategy Development*: Providing a safe haven for staff to reflect on how lessons learned from the information being generated by USAID's IPs and various non-USG regional partners need to inform its future strategies.

3.5.3. Conclusion 3[87]

The ASSESS PASA also contributed to flagship policies, notably the USAID/WA regional mission's commitment to the Journey to Self-Reliance (J2SR) initiative (announced in 2019) and the new localization agenda (announced in December 2021) by:
- *Consultants*: The PASA's consistent recruitment, training, and backstopping of experienced local consultants to facilitate its events;
- *Roundtables*: Hosting one regional roundtable discussion on localization and decolonization, which discussed the importance of local ownership for development programming and results; and
- *Local IP Capacity Strengthening*:
  - Co-creating[88] (with local IPs) four modules on M&E and three modules on communication of results that the USAID/WA REGO IPs used to train their staff as well as a new generation of local partners that are becoming one of the top priorities for USAID in West Africa;
  - Engaging local stakeholders in programming and activity design of the next generation of trade and investment activities in the sub-region of achieving progress through partnerships; and
  - Hosting the Local Works Co-Creation Workshop and Solicitation Conference, which led to a USAID direct award of three grants to local associations.

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[86] Cross-cutting Question 2 in the SOW for the preparation of the ASSESS Final Report asked: "To what extent has the ASSESS PASA addressed capacity needs of USAID/WA REGO and USAID-funded activities that interacted with ASSESS?"
[87] Cross-cutting Question 3 in the SOW for the preparation of the ASSESS Final Report asked: "What unintended contribution has the ASSESS PASA's approach and activities achieved relative to indirectly supporting USAID's localization agenda, which was announced during the last two years of the project?"
[88] Co-creation here is being used in the sense that ASSESS engaged with these IPs during the needs assessment to identify the areas for strengthening, which informed the development of the modules used for the Communication and MEL virtual workshops.

4.0. Sub-IR 3: Performance Data Collection and Reporting Improved

The activities under this ASSESS Sub-IR 3 were designed to:
- Strengthen the capacity of USAID/WA REGO's IPs to comply with USAID MEL requirements and expectations for performance-based management;
- Provide MEL support to USAID/WA REGO;
- Support USAID in collating and reporting quality data on its required indicators that they have to report in their annual PPR (Performance Plan and Report); and
- Provide limited support to USAID in conducting the data quality assessments (DQAs) that they are required to implement every three years on their standard indicators.

4.1. Targets

FY 2014–FY 2017: The original agreement anticipated that ASSESS would develop a short course certificate program in M&E, which local universities or institutions would be able to implement with USAID's support (during the PASA) and as a fee-based sustainable program once the USAID funding ended. Due to the high level of demand for other types of MEL support—notably the increased demand for evaluations and studies (Sub-IR 1) and other types of support (Sub-IR 4), these resources were reallocated to other sub-IRs and activities, and the principal activities in this time period involved facilitating USAID's support of two DQAs in FY 2016 and FY 2017.[89]

FY 2018–FY 2023: Starting in FY 2018, the focus of the activities under this sub-IR shifted to providing on-demand, one-on-one MEL support for USAID/WA REGO's IPs and the USAID/WA REGO Program Analytics Unit (Table 6). At the end of FY 2019, USAID was reconsidering the need for ASSESS to offer in-person group MEL training for its IPs in favor of group training workshops that were intended to complement and not replace the existing MEL training workshops organized directly by USAID/WA REGO for its IPs.

Table 6. Evolution of Technical MEL Support by ASSESS Staff and Consultants Under Sub-IR 3, FY 2014–FY 2023 (X = Yes)

Categories of Support	Staff	Consultants	FY 14	FY 15	FY 16	FY 17	FY 18	FY 19	FY 20	FY 21	FY 22	FY 23
1. DQA Support												
1.A. DQA Support to the West Africa Trade Hub and Partners Network	Yes	No			X							
1.B. Major DQA Support to the CILSS Market Access Program	Yes	Yes				X						
2. One-on-One MEL Support to Three Private Sector IPs												
2.A. Dignity Do the Right Thing (DTRT)	Yes	No					X	X	X	X	X	
2.B. Ethical Apparel Africa (EAA)	Yes	No					X	X	X	X	X	X
2.C. Blue Skies	Yes	No							X	X	X	
3. MEL Support to the USAID/WA REGO Program Analytics Unit	Yes	No					X	X	X	X	X	X

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[89] Per USAID rules and regulations, all DQAs must be under the direct supervision of a USAID staff person to ensure impartiality.

Categories of Support	Staff	Consultants	FY 14	FY 15	FY 16	FY 17	FY 18	FY 19	FY 20	FY 21	FY 22	FY 23
4. MEL Training Workshop												
4.A. Needs Assessment	Yes	No						X	X			
4.B. Training Module Development	Yes	Yes								X	X	X
4.C. Training Workshops	Yes	Yes										X

Source: ASSESS PITT, Annex I.

4.2. Achieved

ASSESS conducted 18 MEL activities out of the target of 16, representing an LOA achievement of 113 percent (Annex I). This included two DQAs, six activities focused on one-on-one MEL support to three IPs, six activities that supported the USAID/WA REGO Program Analytics Unit, and four MEL training workshops for IPs.[90] These activities were executed through the combined efforts of core ASSESS staff and consultants (Table 6).

4.2.1. Category 1: Data Quality Assessment Support

Two of the first MEL activities of ASSESS were:
- *FY 2016*: Facilitation of the fieldwork portion of a DQA for the West Africa Trade Hub and African Partners Network[91] in Ghana; and
- *FY 2017*: An ASSESS-led DQA of the CILSS Market Access Program,[92] which was jointly implemented by ASSESS (three consultants and the ASSESS M&E specialist), USAID/WA REGO, and CILSS staff.

4.2.2. Category 2: One-on-One MEL Support to Three Implementing Partners

From FY 2018 to FY 2023, ASSESS provided MEL support to three private sector firms that were receiving USG assistance through the USAID/WA REGO Trade Team: Dignity Do the Right Thing (DTRT), Ethical Apparel Africa (EAA), and Blue Skies. The duration and type of support varied by year based on each partner's identified needs.
- *FY 2018:* ASSESS was tasked to provide MEL support[93] to EAA. This assistance was in support of USAID/WA REGO's strategy to align indicators across mechanisms to facilitate data aggregation and enhance performance monitoring and reporting.

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[90] The four MEL training workshops for IPs are included in the 47 events conducted by ASSESS as indicated in Table 5 (Sub-IR 2).

[91] The West Africa Trade Hub and African Partners Network was a USAID-funded initiative implemented in select West Africa countries between 2014 and 2019: https://www.tfafacility.org/sites/default/files/2021-04/Activity%20Fact%20sheet%20-%20West%20Africa%20Trade%20Hub%20and%20African%20Partners%20Network.pdf.

[92] USAID provides support to the CILSS Market Access Program, which is designed to support ECOWAS and UEMOA commitments to increase the volume and value of trade in agricultural products (cereals and grains) and livestock at the regional level. Specifically, the program monitors the movement of selected key value chains along selected trade corridors in West Africa (https://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PA00TC1B.pdf).

[93] ASSESS assisted EAA to develop its MEL Plan and also align EAA's key performance indicators (KPIs) with the USAID/WA broader reporting mechanism as outlined in the RDCS framework.

- *FY 2019*: ASSESS provided similar support[94] to DTRT under the Ghana Apparel Manufacturing Expansion Global Development Alliance (GAME-GDA) program.[95]
- *FY 2020:* ASSESS provided technical assistance to EAA to improve its reporting, especially in relation to tracking indicators on exports and job creation. The assistance enabled USAID to effectively monitor the performance of individual apparel factories receiving USG assistance through EAA.
- *FY 2021–FY 2023*: Once COVID-19 hit, the USAID assistance to these three firms shifted to helping mitigate the impact of the pandemic by assisting[96] the firms to repurpose their production lines to meet the changing demands of the market, sustain their operations, and safeguard the jobs of their workers who are predominantly youth and women. ASSESS was then tasked with: 1) helping the IPs realign their reporting templates to track the COVID-19–related activities; and 2) backstopping each firm's production of a final report that summarized the impact of the type of innovative layering and sequencing of assistance from USAID/WA REGO.

4.2.3. Category 3: MEL Support to the USAID/WA REGO Program Analytics Unit

FY 2018: In FY 2018, ASSESS was tasked with developing an indicator reporting database template that could collate and summarize all standard and custom indicators reported annually by USAID/WA REGO IPs. The principal objective of this database was to facilitate USAID/WA REGO's preparation of its annual PPR. ASSESS developed the database in FY 2018, and the USAID/WA REGO Program Analytics Unit shared it with the IPs. In addition, ASSESS supported organization of two of the unit's MEL trainings for the USAID/WA REGO IPs, one in FY 2018 (in Accra, Ghana) and one in FY 2019 (in Abidjan, Cote d'Ivoire).[97]

FY 2019–FY 2022: From FY 2019 to FY 2022, ASSESS assisted the unit with collating the performance indicator information from its IPs (using the online database), which fed into the PPRs submitted to Washington for the respective fiscal years. With the introduction of the Development Information Solution (DIS[98]) for reporting by IPs, USAID/WA REGO's request for this type of assistance ceased in FY 2022.

FY 2024: In FY 2024,[99] ASSESS helped the Program Analytics Unit conduct an intensive review of the FY 2023 indicator data (submitted by IPs) for 12 USAID/WA REGO activities on the DIS. This included examining indicator out-year targets,[100] indicator current and future performance analysis,[101] review of

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[94] ASSESS assisted DTRT to revise its KPIs, updated the Ghana Apparel Manufacturing Expansion Global Development Alliance (GAME-GDA) MEL Plan, and developed a reporting template. ASSESS further assisted DTRT to develop the final project report, which was approved by USAID.

[95] GAME-GDA was a cooperative agreement between USAID/WA and DTRT Limited (2017–2019) that provided industrial apparel training for 1,337 people and created 1,035 new apparel jobs. This partnership resulted in a significant increase in new apparel exports from Ghana to the United States, duty and quota free, under AGOA (https://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PA00XV41.pdf).

[96] Details of the USAID assistance to each of the three firms has been provided in Chapter 5.2.4.

[97] Since these three MEL trainings were led by USAID directly—and the ASSESS team just participated in the trainings—this activity was not counted in the number of MEL activities reported in the ASSESS PITT.

[98] DIS is a web-based, agency-wide portfolio management system designed to capture one cohesive development story—from strategy to results. DIS enables USAID staff and IPs to perform a broad range of business operations, reporting, and planning tasks in one place (https://www.usaid.gov/partner-with-us/resources-for-partners/development-information-solution).

[99] ASSESS conducted the intensive review of DIS information from October 30 to November 3, 2023.

[100] This refers to targets for FY 2024 and FY 2025, depending on the activity end date. The review involved checking if the out-year targets set are reasonable and looking at the results achieved by the activity in FY 2023.

[101] That is, assessing whether the IP has included adequate information on the indicator to describe how the actual performance achieved for the indicator affects progress toward the objectives of the activity, and describing what changes, if any, are necessary in order to keep the activity on track to achieving these objectives.

deviation narratives sections, and justification for the indicator targets set for FY 2024. ASSESS successfully completed the DIS information review and provided feedback to USAID.

4.2.4. Category 4: Training/Capacity Strengthening on MEL

ASSESS was also tasked with organizing a series of MEL workshops for USAID/WA REGO to complement the existing MEL training systems for the USAID/WA REGO IPs (Table 7).

- **Step One—Training Needs Assessment (TNA):** ASSESS started the process by conducting a TNA to evaluate the specific training requirements of the IPs using a standardized TNA tool. The insights gained from the assessment served as a foundational guide, shaping both the methodology and execution strategy for the MEL training tailored to the IPs. The priority needs were categorized into four thematic areas.
- **Step Two—Module Development:** Once the results of the needs assessment were presented and validated by the USAID/WA REGO team leads (for agriculture, environment, trade, and energy), ASSESS used this information to design four modules that responded to the four thematic areas that were identified in the TNA.
- **Step Three—Virtual Training Workshops:** With the onset of COVID-19, ASSESS was asked to convert its original model for in-person group trainings into a series of four two-day remote training programs (Table 7). A total of 74 participants—from 13 IPs representing eight countries[102]—participated in the virtual trainings (Table 7). Each of the training sessions was recorded and the recordings shared with the participants along with the PowerPoint presentations that were used for each session.
- **Step Four—Structured Stakeholder Feedback and Reporting:** 1) Each module included a pre- and post-test; as well as 2) a post-evaluation assessment. The results of the post-evaluation assessment were written up in a final report that followed a standard template such as the one highlighted in Text Box 10 in Chapter 3.

Table 7. ASSESS-Sponsored Training Modules and Date of the Two-Day Virtual MEL Training Workshops (March–August 2023)

Dates	Modules
March 21–22	**Module One: Monitoring and Evaluation, Key Concepts, Approaches, and Methods** Session 1.A. Meeting the M&E Requirements of USAID Session 1.B. Developing an MEL Plan Session 1.C. Designing Participatory M&E Systems
May 10–11	**Module Two: Monitoring in the USAID Program Cycle** Session 2.A. Data Management and Its Importance in USAID Programming Session 2.B. Using Mobile Technology for Data Collection Session 2.C. Intermediate Data Analysis
June 14–15	**Module Three: Evaluation in the USAID Program Cycle** Session 3.A. Using Artificial Intelligence (AI) in M&E Session 3.B. Evaluation Designs Session 3.C. Conducting Systematic Reviews
August 2–3	**Module Four: Collaborating, Learning, and Adapting in USAID** Session 4.A. Communicating Evidence Using M&E Systems

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[102] "The participants included representatives from various implementing partners and contractors including USAID West Africa Biodiversity and Low Emissions Development (WABiLED), West Africa Power Pool (WAPP), West Africa Trade and Investment Hub (WATIH), Impact Pointe Consultancy, Institute of Teacher Education and Development (INTED), Freedom and United Foundation, International Rescue Committee, International Fertilizer Development Center (IFDC), YALI Regional Leadership Center West Africa, Health Strategy and Delivery Foundation (HSDF), West Africa Private Healthcare Federation (FOASPS/WAPHF), African Water and Sanitation Association, and Caritas Kumba. The participants joined from Ghana, Nigeria, Benin, Uganda, Burundi, Mali, Cameroon, and Côte d'Ivoire." ASSESS. 2023. Virtual Workshop on Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL). Accra, Ghana: ASSESS for USAID/WA REGO. October. Pg. 2.

Dates	Modules
	Session 4.B. Developing Learning Questions
	Session 4.C. Outcome Mapping,
	Session 4.D. Using M&E for Learning

Source: ASSESS. 2023. Virtual Workshop on Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL). Accra, Ghana: ASSESS for USAID/WA REGO. October. Pg. 4–8. This document includes a more detailed list of the topics covered in Annex II.

4.3. Early Evidence of Results/Impact

MEL Support to Three Private Sector IPs: The ASSESS support to the three private sector IPs had two very important consequences that have been profiled in a series of "success" stories that ASSESS developed with guidance from the USAID/WA DOCs team (Annex VII).[103] These included:
- Providing the types of quantitative data that USAID/WA REGO needed to justify and design a COVID-19 mitigation program for all three projects; and
- Making it possible for USAID/WA REGO to monitor the impact of this well-timed assistance on workers as well as the wider public that these firms were serving with their products.

MEL Support to the USAID/WA REGO Program Analytics Unit: ASSESS also contributed to USAID/WA REGO's development of stronger systems for harmonizing the reporting on the standard and custom indicators for all of the USAID/WA REGO IPs, including the progressive scale-up of the new DIS system.

Virtual M&E Workshops and Training Modules: Two of the best indicators of the successful achievement of this CA were that[104]:
- Ninety-eight percent of the participants in the four workshops ranked the MEL workshops as "excellent" or "very good" (71 percent excellent; 27 percent very good) in the qualitative feedback they provided on the final assessment form (Text Box 11); and
- Approximately two-thirds of the participants engaged in each workshop for periods of three to four hours (i.e., for the full length or almost the full length of the sessions).

Text Box 11. Sample Participant's Feedback on the MEL Training Workshops

"The Virtual Workshops helped me to work on the current M&E report I am working on. Since then, I always make sure to include CLA in everything that we do not only internal, but also with our sub grantees." (Participant from West Africa Healthcare Federation—FOASPS)

"It was a great learning experience, which made me appreciate activities of MEL at work although I am in the communication department. It has had significant impact in my line of duty although it is a different department." (Participant from Membership-Based Organizational Transformation—MBOT) Project)

Source: ASSESS PASA records. December 2023.

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[103] 1) ASSESS. 2023. USAID's COVID-19 Support to DTRT: Supporting the Apparel Sector in Ghana to Help Fight the COVID-19 Pandemic while Safeguarding Jobs. Accra, Ghana: ASSESS for USAID/WA REGO; 2) ASSESS. 2023. USAID's COVID-19 Rapid Response to Blue Skies: Supporting Businesses to Overcome the Challenges of the Pandemic while Safeguarding Jobs. Accra: ASSESS for USAID/WA REGO.

[104] This includes 74 percent of the virtual trainees in workshop 1; 71 percent in workshop 2; 62 percent in workshop 3; and 67 percent in workshop four. ASSESS. 2023. Virtual Workshop on Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL). Accra, Ghana: ASSESS for USAID/WA REGO. October. Pg. 3 and 7.

4.4. Key Factors That Contributed to or Detracted From Results

4.4.1. Contributed to

- *PASA:* The flexibility accorded to ASSESS by its status as a PASA, not standard USAID contract or grant, increased its ability to:
    - Provide consistent layering and sequencing of MEL support to the three private sector partners; and
    - Adjust this layering and sequencing to the special challenge that emerged because of the pandemic starting in FY 2020.
- *Qualified Staff:* The ASSESS PASA's commitment to the recruitment and retention of experienced staff enabled consistent, high-quality backstopping of the IP and USAID/WA REGO Program Analytics Unit activities it was asked to support.
- *Workshops:* The ASSESS team identified five interrelated factors that contributed to the virtual MEL workshops' success in their initial discussions related to the final report. These factors included:
    - The workshop facilitators (who were made up of experienced consultants and the ASSESS MEL specialist) delivered comprehensive and clear content, making complex MEL concepts easily understandable.
    - The facilitators' profound knowledge and engaging teaching style significantly enhanced the learning experience.
    - The workshop emphasized the practical application of MEL principles, particularly the concept of Collaborating, Learning, and Adapting (CLA),[105] which directly impacted participants' professional practices in large part because all of the modules were based on a rigorous TNA.
    - The interactive and engaging format of the workshop fostered an immersive learning environment, promoting active participation.
    - The structured organization and meticulous scheduling of the workshop ensured efficient and focused learning sessions, contributing to the clear and coherent delivery of content.

4.4.2. Detracted From

- *Delays:* A series of delays in the validation process for the modules and the TNA, which delayed the actual training to the final year of the PASA, made it impossible to organize the virtual workshops more than once.
- *Training Targets:* While ASSESS conducted MEL training, no direct target was set in the PITT for training in terms of total number trained or the number of IPs affected by the training, which made it hard to show the full impact of the training and to identify gaps.

4.5. Conclusions

4.5.1. Conclusion 1[106]

There is clear evidence from the PASA quarterly and semi-annual and event reports that ASSESS achieved all of the revised targets for its activities under this sub-IR, which included:

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[105] See the USAID CLA Framework: https://www.usaid.gov/evaluation/collaborating-learning-and-adapting-cla-framework.
[106] Cross-cutting Question 1 in the SOW for the preparation of the ASSESS Final Report asked: "To what extent has the ASSESS PASA achieved its purpose and goal, IR, and sub-IRs?"

- Enabling USAID/WA to monitor the impact of its routine support and COVID-19 mitigation support on a small sub-sample (three) of its private sector IPs;
- Providing routine backup support (through the ASSESS core staff and consultants) to the USAID/WA REGO Program Analytics Unit that ensured the quality and accuracy of its regional M&E data; and
- Developing a series of training modules that were based on a rigorous assessment of IP needs that were pilot tested in four IP workshops in FY 2023.

4.5.2. Conclusion 2[107]

The ASSESS PASA was also very effective in addressing USAID/WA REGO's most pressing capacity strengthening needs, which evolved over the LOA by:
- Pilot testing a new, more strategic four-step approach to strengthening the USAID/WA REGO IPs' M&E capacity, which included: 1) a new TNA tool; 2) the design of four training modules based on the priority needs identified by the TNA; 3) pilot testing a new model for virtual MEL training sessions using a series of cutting-edge online training technologies in order to better engage the trainees in the presentation of the modules; and 4) stakeholder feedback and reporting.
- Collaborating with the USAID/WA REGO Program Analytics Unit to provide monitoring support that helped the unit: 1) review MEL plans and ensure the quality of the IPs' reported indicators; and 2) adapt to—and ensure the data collection quality of—its use of the new DIS system once it was rolled out (through its routine support to the USAID/WA REGO Program Analytics Unit); and
- Pilot testing a new model for strengthening the M&E capacity of USAID/WA REGO's private sector IPs both prior to and during the pandemic.

4.5.3. Conclusion 3[108]

One unintended contribution of the PASA's Sub-IR 3 activities has been to demonstrate the utility of the PASA's four-pronged M&E capacity strengthening model (needs assessment; module development; virtual workshop training; stakeholder feedback and reporting) for strengthening IP M&E capacity as well as the two categories of local partners targeted by USAID's new LCS guidelines. This includes those serving as IPs through the Government to Government (G2G) funding mechanism, private sector businesses, as well as those affected by other USAID/WA REGO activities' training and outreach activities that are not IPs, such as national-level ministries, and metropolitan and regional organizations like UEMOA. This also includes the staff of the national university (KNUST) that was the local manager of the PASA that participated in these training programs.

Another unintended contribution was to highlight some of the ways that USAID investment in strengthening local partners' capacity to monitor and report on donor investments (like the USAID/WA REGO Trade Team's investment in the three private sector businesses) can help donors monitor and adjust this investment in response to shifts in local capacity and macro conditions like the COVID-19 pandemic.

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[107] Cross-cutting Question 2 in the SOW for the preparation of the ASSESS Final Report asked: "To what extent has the ASSESS PASA addressed capacity needs of USAID/WA REGO and USAID-funded activities that interacted with ASSESS?"
[108] Cross-cutting Question 3 in the SOW for the preparation of the ASSESS Final Report asked: "What unintended contribution has the ASSESS PASA's approach and activities achieved relative to indirectly supporting USAID's localization agenda, which was announced during the last two years of the project?"

5.0. Sub-IR 4: Requested Support Provided to Enhance USAID's Performance

The activities under Sub-IR 4 were designed to facilitate the operations of the USAID/WA REGO technical teams[109] by ensuring the provision of flexible, real-time, on-demand services to complement their ongoing programs. These activities included:
- Short- and long-term technical assistance (TA) to USAID/WA REGO and other USAID/WA regional teams;
- Short- and long-term TA and logistic support to select USAID-funded activities and initiatives;
- Short- and long-term TA to West Africa regional institutions through embedded experts[110];
- Support for a USAID/WA Trade Team-managed effort to pilot test new, innovative ways of engaging the private sector in the emergency COVID-19 response; and
- Translation services.

5.1. Targets

FY 2014–FY 2016: The original ASSESS agreement focused on the first three components that supported Sub-IRs 1–3.

FY 2017–FY 2023: In FY 2017, ASSESS added a fourth component (Sub-IR 4) to "house" the increasing number of demands from USAID/WA REGO that were outside its original scope, especially the growing number of requests for the PASA to serve as a mechanism for hiring short- and long-term technical assistants to support the USAID/WA REGO teams and other USAID/WA offices. Most of the Sub-IR 4 activities were led by consultants with the ASSESS staff providing logistic support (Table 8).

Table 8. Evolution of Sub-IR 4 Support to Enhance USAID's Performance by ASSESS Staff and Consultants, FY 2014–FY 2023 (X = Yes)

Category of Support	Staff [111]	Consultants	FY 14	FY 15	FY 16	FY 17	FY 18	FY 19	FY 20	FY 21	FY 22	FY 23
1. Short- and long-term TA to USAID/WA REGO and other USAID/WA regional teams	Yes	Yes				X	X	X	X	X	X	X
2. Short- and long-term TA and logistic support to select USAID-funded activities and initiatives	Yes	Yes		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
3. Short- and long-term TA to West Africa regional institutions through embedded experts	Yes	Yes				X	X	X	X	X		

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[109] For the USAID/WA Agriculture, Energy, Environment, and Trade teams.
[110] The embedded experts were required to work from the operational sites or physical locations of the regional institutions they were recruited to assist.
[111] ASSESS provided logistic support to all the consultants but was not involved in the direct execution of this support, which was led by the recruited experts.

Category of Support	Staff[111]	Consultants	FY 14	FY 15	FY 16	FY 17	FY 18	FY 19	FY 20	FY 21	FY 22	FY 23
4. Support for a USAID/WA Trade Team-managed effort to pilot test new, innovative ways of engaging the private sector in the emergency COVID-19 response	Yes	No							X	X		
5. Translation services	Yes	Yes		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X

Source: ASSESS, based on PASA records. December 2023.

5.2. Achieved

From FY 2014 to FY 2023, ASSESS recruited and managed the contracts of 28[112] short- and long-term technical experts as well as several pools of translators to support its Sub-IR 4 activities. Of the 28 experts:
- *Category 1*: Eight experts were recruited to provide TA to USAID/WA REGO teams, and four provided TA to other USAID/WA regional offices;
- *Category 2*: Three supported ongoing USAID/WA REGO activities and initiatives; and
- *Category 3*: Thirteen were experts embedded in regional organizations for institutional capacity strengthening.

5.2.1. Category 1: Short- and Longer-Term Technical Assistance for USAID/WA REGO and Other USAID/WA Regional Offices

From FY 2017 to FY 2023, ASSESS was tasked with recruiting and managing the contracts[113] of 12 experts mobilized to provide direct TA to two of the USAID/WA REGO teams (i.e., Agriculture and Trade teams) and four other offices within the USAID/WA mission (Table 9).

Table 9. ASSESS Sub-IR 4 Support for Short- and Longer-Term TA to the USAID/WA REGO Teams and Four Other Regional USAID/WA Offices, FY 2017–FY 2023

Period	USAID Team	Title of Experts Supported	No. of Experts	Technical Assistance Provided and Key Outcomes
FY 2017–FY 2019	Agriculture	Agriculture Expert	1	Supported the USAID/WA Feed the Future (FtF) team to develop the five-year Global Food Security Strategy (GFSS) Regional plan[114] (2019–2024)

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[112] This figure (i.e., 28) does not include the teams of experts recruited to conduct evaluations and assessments or individual experts recruited to facilitate learning events.

[113] This includes contracting the identified expert, providing orientation to the expert as part of the onboarding process, seeking USAID's approval to process experts' invoices, payment of experts' invoices, and providing all logistic support, including arrangements for travel, as needed.

[114] The FtF West Africa Regional Plan, covering 2019–2024, presents a five-year strategy for West Africa to achieve the initiative's goal of reducing poverty, hunger, and malnutrition. This plan reflects an evidence-based, integrated, interagency, and regional approach to pursuing the three objectives of sustainable agriculture-led growth, resilience, and nutrition while positioning the region and its countries to become self-reliant (https://www.feedthefuture.gov/resource/feed-the-future-west-africa-regional-plan/).

Period	USAID Team	Title of Experts Supported	No. of Experts	Technical Assistance Provided and Key Outcomes
FY 2019–FY 2023	Agriculture	Senior Agriculture Development Advisor	1	Technical support to USAID/WA REGO in the development and implementation of the USAID/WA agriculture portfolio in support of the mission's FtF objectives in West Africa
FY 2023–FY 2023		Senior Agricultural Program Design Expert	1	Led the initial strategic phase of designing a new five-year program for the next generation of program activities to scale up availability, access, and use of regionally endorsed varieties of seeds and agriculture technologies in West Africa
FY 2019–FY 2020	Trade	Public–Private Partnership (PPP) Advisor	1	Identification of high potential partnerships with U.S. companies and investors interested in expanding their sourcing and investments in the West Africa region
FY 2020–FY 2020		Senior Investment Advisor	1	Supported USAID/WA to identify high-potential partnerships with financial service providers to support increased access to finance and new investments in the West Africa region
FY 2021–FY 2021		- Senior Research Economist - Senior Data Economist - Senior Trade and Investment Expert	3	Conducted a transaction-level analysis of the impact of U.S. investments on the Sustainable Development Goals
FY 2020–FY 2021	RPO[115]	RDCS Coordinator	1	Conducted literature reviews, synthesized the findings of various assessments, drafted portions of the USAID/WA RDCS (2020–2025), and facilitated consultations within the mission and with key stakeholders in the region
FY 2019–FY 2019	RPGO[116]	Knowledge Management Advisor	1	Interviewed stakeholders engaged in project implementation and made recommendations to USAID on the appropriate direction and specifications for a system to track and manage performance
FY 2021–FY 2023	DOC[117]	Senior Communication Specialist	1	Worked with the DOC team to update USAID/WA's website and social media portals
FY 2019–FY 2022	BHA[118]	Senior Monitoring and Evaluation Advisor	1	Served as interim M&E Advisor for the USAID/WA Regional Office and provided technical support to the BHA officers in the West Africa Region, the Mission, and the BHA Awardees
Total			**12**	

Source: ASSESS team, based on PASA records. December 2023.

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[115] Regional Program Office.
[116] Regional Peace and Governance Office.
[117] Development Outreach and Communications.
[118] Bureau of Humanitarian Assistance.

5.2.2. Category 2: Short- and Longer-Term Technical Assistance and Logistical Support to Select USAID-Funded Activities and Initiatives

A second category of support provided TA and logistic support to three USAID-funded activities and initiatives (Table 10).

5.2.2.1. West Africa Trade and Investment Hub: In December 2017, the USAID/WA REGO Trade Team commissioned ASSESS to recruit and provide logistic support for two consultants—a trade specialist and a customs lawyer—for the AGOA trade preference program until the new USAID-funded West Africa Trade and Investment Hub[119] became operational. ASSESS provided support to the experts from January 1, 2018, to March 31, 2020. This enabled the two experts to provide continued support[120] to West African partner governments and firms until the new Trade and Investment Hub activity became operational.

5.2.2.2. SERVIR West Africa Project: ASSESS was also commissioned (by the USAID/WA Environment Team) with facilitating the recruitment and initial contract management of the SERVIR West Africa coordinator during the design and start-up phase of the SERVIR West Africa program (FY 2015–FY 2018) (Table 10).[121]

5.2.2.3. American National Standards Institute: ASSESS was also tasked (by the USAID/WA Trade Team) with supporting the American National Standards Institute's (ANSI) organization of a series of workshops and roadshows in Ghana, Côte d'Ivoire, and Senegal from FY 2016 to FY 2021 (Table 10). These activities supported the USAID's Standard Alliance Program in West Africa.[122]

Table 10. ASSESS Sub-IR 4 Support to Select USAID/WA REGO Activities, FY 2015–FY 2021

Period	Activity	Technical and Logistic Assistance Provided	Direct Results
FY 2018–FY 2020	West Africa Trade and Investment Hub	- Recruitment and contract management of the AGOA specialist and customs lawyer - Logistic support for capacity building workshops	- A series of AGOA-related training workshops and capacity building activities organized for partners in West Africa - Capacity of West African partner governments and firms built in U.S. customs documentation and requirements for export
FY 2015–FY 2018	SERVIR West Africa Program	Facilitated the recruitment and contract management of the SERVIR West Africa coordinator	- Management of SERVIR West Africa activities - Partnership building, coordination, and communication with existing SERVIR partners and collaborators

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[119]The Trade and Investment Hub is an integral part of the Prosper Africa initiative and partners with U.S. and West African private sector firms to generate new private sector investment in key sectors to create jobs and increase trade between the United States and West Africa, including through increased utilization of the AGOA.

[120] As part of the support, the AGOA specialist and customs lawyer organized AGOA capacity building and sensitization workshops for firms and private sector actors in Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Chad, Congo, the Gambia, Ghana, Liberia, Nigeria, and Mali. ASSESS provided logistic support for the organization of all the workshops.

[121] The SERVIR West Africa Program is an integral component of the mission's environment and resilience platform and is also part of the global network of SERVIR hubs supported by USAID and the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA).

[122] The Standards Alliance (2013–2021) is a public–private partnership between ANSI and USAID that assists developing countries in effectively implementing their commitments under the World Trade Organization's (WTO) Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT) Agreement. The ASSESS support to ANSI commenced on April 1, 2016, and ended on March 31, 2021 (https://www.ansi.org/trade-development/development-programs/usaid-programs#:~:text=The%20Standards%20Alliance%20(2013%2D2021,to%20Trade%20(TBT)%20Agreement).

Period	Activity	Technical and Logistic Assistance Provided	Direct Results
			- Engagement with potential future partners or collaborators - Technical guidance, leadership, and advocacy in the use of geospatial tools and services to improve decision making and development outcomes
FY 2016–FY 2021	ANSI	Logistic support for ANSI's activities in three countries, which included securing venues	A series of Standard Alliance Workshops and roadshows organized in three countries (Cote d'Ivoire, Ghana, and Senegal)

Source: ASSESS team, based on PASA records. December 2023.

5.2.3. Category 3: Short- and Long-Term Technical Assistance to West Africa Regional Institutions Through Embedded Experts

ASSESS was also tasked by the USAID/WA Agriculture Team with managing the contracts of 13 embedded technical experts (both short and longer term) for three of the principal regional institutions working with USAID/WA REGO, including CORAF/WECARD, UEMOA, and ECOWAS (Table 11).[123]

Table 11. ASSESS Sub-IR 4 Support to Three Regional Institutions, FY 2017–FY 2021

FY	Partner	Type of Technical Assistance	No. of Experts	Key Direct Results
FY 2017–FY 2018	CORAF/WECARD	Agricultural Development	1	- CORAF's processes for managing new partnerships and contracts streamlined - Communication and marketing strategy developed for CORAF - Led to the development of CORAF's ten-year Strategic Plan (2018–2027)
		Grants/partnership management	1	
		Proposal Development	3	
		Strategic Planning/Resource Mobilization	4	
		Communication and Marketing	1	
		Scientific Writing and Editing	1	
FY 2019–FY 2019	UEMOA	Proposal Development and Writing	1	Revised cooperative agreement between USAID and UEMOA (AID-624-A-16-00004)
FY 2021–FY 2021	ECOWAS	Strategic Planning and Proposal Development	1	- Revised three-year Operational Plan to support the implementation of ECOWAS regional priorities for resilience, food, and nutrition security in West Africa - 2021 annual work plan for the draft Economic Community of West Africa Agricultural Policy (ECOWAP) 2021–2023 Support Program
Total			**13**	

Source: ASSESS team, based on PASA records. December 2023.

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[123] The three regional partners are: 1) ECOWAS; 2) UEMOA; and 3) CORAF/WECARD.

5.2.4. Category 4: Emergency COVID-19 Response[124]

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the USAID/WA Trade Team commissioned ASSESS to be the vehicle for a special COVID-19 mitigation package for three private sector organizations, two of which were already being supported by ASSESS under Sub-IR 3 (see Chapter 4.2.2 of this report: DTRT Apparel, EAA, and Blue Skies).[125]

5.2.5. Category 5: Translation Services

USAID recognizes language as a significant barrier to partnering with local organizations and to local leadership of USAID-funded programs.[126] To mitigate this risk, USAID scaled up its requests to ASSESS for assistance with a variety of translation services: English-French-English translation of documents and video products and live or virtual interpretation services during events. Between FY 2015 and FY 2023, ASSESS facilitated the translation of 130 communication products from English to French and from French to English through a network of qualified translators in different countries. These products include translating reports, concept notes, agendas, slide presentations, live and prerecorded video clips, press releases, fact sheets, content for online platforms, social media, and other relevant materials as required. These services were provided by qualified translators in different West African countries through a series of blanket contracts that were managed by a bilingual ASSESS staff person.

5.3. Early Evidence of Results/Impact

Short-Term and Longer-Term Assistance to USAID/WA REGO: The ASSESS support to the USAID/WA's regional teams helped strengthen the teams' ongoing programs, provided transitional support for key programming positions between projects, as well as strengthened future planning and policy decisions. Some of the key short-term results of this demand-driven assistance included (Table 9):

- Helping the USAID/WA FtF Team develop the five-year Global Food Security Strategy (GFSS) Regional plan (2019–2024)[127];
- Leading the initial design of a new five-year program[128] to scale up availability, access, and use of regionally endorsed varieties of seeds and agriculture technologies in West Africa;
- Helping identify U.S. companies and investors interested in expanding their sourcing and investments in the West Africa region as well as financial service providers interested in increasing investors' access to finance for new investments in Wet Africa;

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[124] As part of implementation of the COVID-19 response, USAID tasked ASSESS to provide MEL support to the three private sector partners to facilitate monitoring and reporting (see Sub-IR 3). USAID also allowed ASSESS partner KNUST to attach three PhD students to conduct COVID-19 related research, details of which can be found under Sub-IR 1.

[125] The third firm, Blue Skies, was added in FY 2020. Blue Skies is an export-oriented fruit processing company based in Doboro, Ghana. It is important to note that the information generated by the PASA's Sub-IR 3 support for M&E (see Chapter 4.2.2 of this report) contributed to the information that the Trade Team needed to justify the investment in this mitigation package under Sub-IR 4.

[126] USAID. 2023. Advancing Locally Led Development (LLD) and Localization: Leveraging Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning (MEL) Platforms. Washington, DC: USAID. https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/2023-08/USAID_NPI_MELPlatforms-ALP_FINAL.pdf.

[127] The FtF West Africa Regional Plan, covering 2019–2024, presents a five-year strategy for West Africa to achieve the initiative's goal of reducing poverty, hunger, and malnutrition. This plan reflects an evidence-based, integrated, interagency, and regional approach to pursuing the three objectives of sustainable agriculture-led growth, resilience, and nutrition while positioning the region and its countries to become self-reliant (https://www.feedthefuture.gov/resource/feed-the-future-west-africa-regional-plan/).

[128] As a follow-on to the Partnership for Agricultural Research, Education and Development (PAIRED) activity, which ended in December 2022.

- Conducting literature reviews, synthesizing the findings of various assessments, and drafting portions of the USAID/WA RDCS (2020–2025); and
- Helping support an interim M&E advisor for the Bureau of Humanitarian Assistance (BHA) West Africa Regional Office.

Short-Term and Longer-Term Assistance to Projects:
– ASSESS's role in hosting the West Africa SERVIR coordinator for design and start-up of the West Africa SERVIR hub played a critical role in establishing the platform in West Africa starting in 2014, leading to its current success (Text Box 12).
– The PASA's willingness and ability to support two consultants for the West Africa Trade and Investment Hub (from January 2018 to March 31, 2020) helped minimize the disruptions caused by a gap in USAID funding between their initial and follow-on phases (Table 10).

Text Box 12. Early Evidence of Results: Broader Institutional Impacts of the ASSESS Sub-IR 4 Support on the SERVIR West Africa Program

SERVIR West Africa Program: Under the President's Emergency Plan for Adaptation and Resilience (PREPARE) November 2022 USAID Progress Brief, the West Africa SERVIR program is highlighted as one of the achievements to date under Pillar 1 of PREPARE: Knowledge: Information is Power. ASSESS's role in hosting the West Africa SERVIR coordinator over three years for design and start-up of the West Africa SERVIR hub played a critical role in establishing the platform in West Africa starting in 2014, leading to its current success.

Source: ASSESS records and online references to SERVIR. November 2023–January 2024. USAID. 2022. USAID Progress on PREPARE. The President's Emergency Plan for Adaptation and Resilience (PREPARE). Washington. November. https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/2022-12/2022-USAID-Progress-on-PREPARE.pdf.

Text Box 13. Early Evidence of Results: Broader Institutional Impacts of the ASSESS Sub-IR 1.4 Support on CORAF

The TA to CORAF led to the development of CORAF's ten-year Strategic Plan (2018–2027), which was adopted by the General Assembly—the highest decision-making body of CORAF—at its 12th Annual Meeting, held on April 11, 2018. The strategic plan: 1) prioritizes up-scaling innovative technologies and accelerating the adoption of existing technologies; and 2) defines the trends, opportunities, and challenges that agricultural research and development systems in the region face, as well as contemporary agricultural policies and strategies.

Source: ASSESS records and online references to CORAF, November 2023–January 2024. CORAF. 2018. Catalyzing Innovations: Our Strategic Plan 2018–2027. Dakar. CORAF. https://www.coraf.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/StrategicPlan.pdf.

COVID-19 Mitigation Support: The ASSESS PASA's willingness and ability to provide a vehicle for the Trade Team to develop a highly innovative and timely set of COVID-19 mitigation strategies to three targeted private institutions[129]:
- Enabled EAA to manufacture over 50,000 sets of medical scrubs for use by health care providers both locally and internationally and also enable the beneficiary factories to keep operating through a period of uncertainty;
- Allowed DTRT to have the capacity to repurpose its production lines to produce and distribute over 4.5 million units of medical-grade personal protective equipment to Ghana

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[129] ASSESS. 2021. Safeguarding Lives and Livelihoods in West Africa: USAID's COVID-19 Support to Local Businesses in Ghana. Accra, Ghana: ASSESS for USAID/WA REGO. June. Also discussed in the success stories included in Annex VII.

health workers and the public valued at $6.7 million and to safeguard the jobs of over 2,000 factory workers, including women and youth; and

- Helped Blue Skies overcome some production and trade barriers brought on by the pandemic and sustain the jobs of over 2,000 young men and women in Ghana.

Translation Services: One of the best indicators of the successful impact of ASSESS's translation services are the high rankings given to the ASSESS PASA's regional CLA event, most of which involved activities in both francophone and anglophone countries.

5.4. Key Factors That Contributed to or Detracted From Results

5.4.1. Contributed to

Categories 1–5: Six cross-cutting factors that contributed to the effective execution of the Sub-IR 4 activities (Categories 1–5) include:

- *PASA*: ASSESS was a PASA, not a "traditional" contract or grant. This status gave it the flexibility in responding to the new and evolving needs of USAID/WA REGO, which allowed it to respond to requests in real time, and adjust its annual budget, work plans, and staffing to support the new Sub-IR 4 activities. Flexibility and swiftness in the contracting process for consultants offered by the local partner university helped in the mobilization of experts.
- *Consultant Network*: ASSESS's consistent commitment to its mandate (under its agreement) to identify a network of qualified consultants in different countries that it could mobilize on short notice was used to facilitate the quick mobilization of qualified editors and translators by issuing a Blanket Purchase Agreement (BPA) with local contractors. This facilitated quick turnaround translations and editing on a repetitive basis.
- *Core Staffing:* ASSESS's recruitment and retention of a strong base of qualified technical staff and management provided the in-house capacity to develop and maintain an active network of qualified consultants with the necessary language and technical skills to execute the new activities.
- *Partnership Activity Management Model:* Key to the staff's successful building of the consultant network to support USAID/WA REGO across the sub-region was its commitment to a partnership model for all of its CAs or joint agreements with different units of USAID/WA REGO, projects, and university-based programs or consultants. This partnership model included: 1) the active involvement of the beneficiary, USAID/WA or regional partner, in the design of a clear SOW that clearly delineated the role of each partner (USAID, ASSESS, and the local partner) in the activity; 2) the active involvement (which was spelled out in each SOW) of at least one of the technical staff and their line supervisor in technical backstopping of each of the CAs; and 3) a management approach that respected the local ownership of the CA product—be it a regional organization, a regional project, or a bilateral mission (through a buy-in).
- *Wholistic Approach:* USDA's commitment to executing the PASA in an integrated, holistic manner facilitated the layering and sequencing of support from different sub-IR activities once a specific need was identified (by ASSESS) and approved by USAID/WA REGO.
- *Localized Financial Support*: A sixth cross-cutting factor that affected each of the other four was the effective devolution of financial decision making (with USDA oversight) to the ASSESS PASA's key local partner, KNUST-BIRD, which made it easier—and quicker—to adjust project budgets and move the funds needed to mobilize the consultant and translation contracts that fueled the Sub-IR 4 activities.

Category 3: In addition to these cross-cutting factors, the staff identified a number of factors that were specific to ASSESS's support for the regional organizations.

- *Requests Generated by the Organization:* USAID required that all requests for assistance be initiated by the institutions themselves. For instance, CORAF as an institution had conducted an institutional audit in 2016 that resulted in findings that pointed to the thematic areas for institutional strengthening. CORAF approached USAID for support, based on which ASSESS was commissioned to mobilize experts for the provision of TA. This arrangement fostered ownership of the entire process and the resulting deliverables. Also, given that the regional partners initiated the process cognizant of their inherent institutional weaknesses or areas for improvement, the institutions were keen on ensuring that the support being provided responded to their expressed needs.
- *Management Model for Experts:* The model adopted for managing the experts also contributed to its success. The roles of each of the partners (i.e., USAID, regional partners, and ASSESS) were clearly highlighted at the start of the CA. Upon approval of the regional partners' request for support, USAID provided the funding for the activity by commissioning its mechanism, ASSESS, to work directly with the regional institution in ensuring the onboarding of experts. With ASSESS acting for and on behalf of USAID, the need for USAID's direct involvement in the implementation of the support to the regional institutions was reduced, enabling the mission to use its time more efficiently on prioritized activities.
- *Embedding the Experts Within the Regional Institutions*: The TA required all the experts to work predominantly from the regional institutions' headquarters. This arrangement helped facilitate interaction and regular working sessions with CORAF staff and leadership. This was also an effective strategy for the in-house designated staff from the regional institutions to work directly with and also learn from their respective experts.

Category 4

- *Holistic Approach (e.g., links between Sub-IRs 3 and 4):* The fact that the ASSESS PASA had an earlier commitment (under Sub-IR 3) to strengthen the capacity of the three private sector actors provided the Trade Team with the information they needed to design and monitor an appropriate and timely COVID-19 mitigation strategy.

Category 5

- *Blanket Contracts:* The blanket contracts that were negotiated with a qualified pool of translators enabled ASSESS to provide quick responses to translation service requests.
- *Designated Staff Person:* A key factor that contributed to quality control was that ASSESS employed a full-time bilingual knowledge and information management specialist who supervised the translations, in addition to the staff's core function on the project.

5.4.2. Detracted From

- While there is considerable evidence that the Sub-IR 4 activities were very successful in strengthening USAID/WA REGO's programs in West Africa, this is difficult to document because the PASA never had a final assessment or evaluation.

5.5. Conclusions

5.5.1. Conclusion 1[130]

There is clear evidence from the ASSESS PASA's quarterly and semi-annual reports that:
- ASSESS achieved the revised annual targets for Sub-IR 4; and
- This support (for short-term TA, translation services, and one-time issues like COVID-19 mitigation):
  - Strengthened USAID's existing and future programs by funding a number of critical activities that were not included in the budget of its existing IPs or core funding for USAID/WA REGO; and
  - Helped USAID be more efficient, effective, and resilient to the constant shifts and evolving needs of its regional programing.

5.5.2. Conclusion 2[131]

The activities under Sub-IR 4 addressed some of USAID/WA REGO's most pressing capacity needs by:
- Making it easier for USAID/WA REGO to access the short-term and longer-term consultants it needs for quality programming;
- Strengthening the capacity of three of the leading regional economic organizations in West Africa as well as their communication and collaboration with USAID/WA REGO;
- Providing a mechanism for USAID/WA REGO to pilot test an innovative model for strengthening the capacity of West Africa's private sector to mitigate the short-term economic and health impacts of future pandemics; and
- Increasing the linkages and synergies across the disparate USAID/WA REGO portfolio by making it easier for USAID/WA REGO and the PASA to access a network of West Africa-based vetted translation services.

5.5.3. Conclusion 3[132]

Although none of the activities under Sub-IR 4 worked with the two categories of stakeholders being targeted by the agency's new localization policy, they contributed to strengthening the capacity of USAID/WA REGO and its key regional partners to better support localization by pilot testing and scaling up a new, very flexible PASA model that facilitated USAID/WA REGO's accessing qualified consultants and translation services in each of the West African countries they support.

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[130] Cross-cutting Question 1 in the SOW for the preparation of the ASSESS Final Report asked: "To what extent has the ASSESS PASA achieved its purpose and goals, IR, and sub-IRs?"
[131] Cross-cutting Question 2 in the SOW for the preparation of the ASSESS Final Report asked: "To what extent has the ASSESS PASA addressed capacity needs of USAID/WA REGO and USAID-funded activities that interacted with ASSESS?"
[132] Cross-cutting Question 3 in the SOW for the preparation of the ASSESS Final Report asked: "What unintended contribution has the ASSESS PASA's approach and activities achieved relative to indirectly supporting USAID's localization agenda, which was announced during the last two years of the project?"

6.0. Best Practices and Lessons Learned

Based on document review and a participatory review process conducted internally and with USAID/WA REGO teams regularly over the LOA, the ASSESS staff and partners identified:
- **Best Practices**: Nineteen examples of programming best practices and six cross-cutting management best practices that contributed to the PASA's global achievement for each of the sub-IRs; and
- **Lessons Learned**: Nineteen examples of programming lessons learned and nine cross-cutting lessons learned for management and for modeling and implementing localization.

6.1. Best Practices

For the purposes of this final close-out report, a best practice is defined as a method, technique, or approach that the ASSESS PASA used to implement activities that yielded desirable results, which could be emulated or replicated by others to achieve their goal when implementing similar activities.

6.1.1. Sub-IR 1: Recommendations From Evaluations and Studies Operationalized

1. Develop a comprehensive CA (evaluation) manual outlining standardized technical procedures and templates to guide the conduct of evaluations and ensure consistency and precision.
2. Collaborate closely with USAID teams on the development of a clear SOW for the commissioned evaluation or study in order to have a shared understanding of the CA, expected deliverables, timelines, and budget to align evaluation efforts with agency goals.
3. Ensure that each SOW incorporates sufficient time for the review of deliverables into the project timeline and that any expansion of the scope includes a formal (e.g., approved by the project/PASA and by USAID) extension of timelines to maintain the quality of evaluations.
4. Recruit a team of highly qualified experts with robust writing skills that includes a strong subject matter expert to enhance the quality and depth of the evaluation.
5. Provide rigorous orientation and technical backstopping to the consultant that is hired to lead an evaluation, assessment, or special study that includes: a) assisting them in adapting and using standard survey tools and research protocols; b) participating in the field studies, interviews, and focus group discussions (FGDs); c) thorough verification of the major findings; and d) facilitating the write up and editing of reports.
6. Require all evaluations and studies to go through a three-stage review process that involves:
   - *Stage 1:* An initial review by the Technical Team and principal investigators;
   - *Stage 2:* A compliance check with USAID's standard quality checklists including: 2.a) "Criteria to Ensure the Quality of Evaluation Report" (ADS 201.3.5.17), 2.b) the Evaluation Report Compliance Checklist, and 2.c) the Evaluation Report Review Template; and
   - *Stage 3:* Copy editing conducted by the MEL mechanism's communications and knowledge management specialist, supplemented by an external copy editor.
7. Employ various feedback mechanisms such as mini-surveys, feedback forms, in-brief and out-brief sessions, and key informant interviews with activity POCs and/or requesting offices to develop an iterative feedback process that contributes to ongoing quality enhancement.
8. Work with faculty associated with a program's university partner(s) to identify qualified students to conduct more detailed, long-term studies that can be incorporated into their PhD dissertations and add value for USAID and its partners.

6.1.2. Sub-IR 2: Availability of Information for Decision Making Increased (For Event Management Only)

1. Anticipate the need for planning meetings and simulations both prior to and during events (both virtual and in-person) to give the project team an opportunity to explore and share ideas on how to implement the workshop sessions.
2. Develop a standard list of checklists, templates, and forms to allow better tracking of planning processes and management of the many risks that are associated with in-person, virtual, and hybrid (in-person and virtual) training.
3. *Consultants:*
   - Use experienced consultants and facilitators to facilitate "interactive and engaging"[133] workshops and events to ensure that new trends and global best practices are integrated during pre-planning and introduced to participants during the execution of events.
   - Develop a flexible and responsive approach to identifying, mobilizing, onboarding, and managing these consultants recruited to facilitate the regional events.
4. *Interactive and Engaging Virtual Workshops:*
   - Prioritize interactive and engaging delivery to keep virtual events as close to in-person as possible.
   - Consider: a) using parking lots to collate questions and comments for facilitators' attention post-event; b) providing a channel to address participants' questions and concerns; and c) organizing icebreakers to prevent participant fatigue and apathy during long sessions.
5. Develop engaging agendas[134] that encourage the participation of all participants to share views and experiences for better planning and program outcomes.
6. Make translation services available for mixed audiences, both for pre-event planning and during events.
7. *Monitoring and Evaluation*:
   - Ensure that each event has a system for processing participant feedback both during and after the event.
   - Conduct a rigorous post-event evaluation (following a standard template) that critiques the event design and execution as a basis for improving future events.

6.1.3. Sub-IR 3: Performance Data Collection and Reporting Improved

1. *Capacity Strengthening Approach:*
   - Share all the required tools and templates to guide reporting with the targeted IPs.
   - Conduct a TNA for each IP to help tailor training and mentoring to the needs of the IPs.
   - Use virtual MEL workshops to overcome the logistic challenges and cost of offering continuous capacity strengthening.
   - Develop a virtual M&E training workshop guide for the MEL mechanism staff to ensure that the training modules respond to the needs identified in the stakeholder TNA.
   - Collaborate with the IPs in the preparation and review of their quarterly reports and key performance indicators (KPIs) to ensure that the reports align with USAID's requirements and ensure that any feedback from USAID is integrated effectively.
2. Anticipate the need to adapt programming to unforeseen shifts in guidance and the macroenvironment of the MEL mechanisms.

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[133] The term "interactive and engaging" is used for workshops that used different internet-based tools to engage the participants in interactive training exercises during the workshop.
[134] Engaging agendas are well thought-through meeting agendas that clearly specify the purpose of the meeting, define objectives of each session, and ensure that items to be discussed in the various sessions of the meeting are equally well developed, with guiding questions in a way that enables participants to contribute more actively in the meeting.

6.1.4. Sub-IR 4: Requested Support Provided to Enhance USAID's Performance

1. Ensure that any request from a USAID regional or bilateral mission to the implementing mechanism (such as ASSESS) is accompanied by an SOW that clearly outlines the type of expertise required, expected roles, and deliverables for any new, unprecedented types of support. The detailed SOW serves to guide the mobilization of qualified experts with the requisite expertise to provide the required TA.
2. *Collaborative Expert Recruitment and Selection:*
   - Involve the regional partner (requiring institutional strengthening support) and the USAID requesting office in the expert identification process.
   - Give priority to experts with significant experience of working in similar areas in the West Africa region.
   - Given the peculiar nature of regional institutions, ensure that experts with prior experience working with the beneficiary institutions are prioritized for consideration.
   - Collaborate with the USAID requesting offices and the regional partners on the approval of experts for each of the tasks before proceeding to contract them.

6.1.5. Cross-Cutting Factors That Contributed to ASSESS' Achievements

For Programming

1. The ASSESS SOW (that set the stage for the candidates' applications) and the ASSESS agreement (with the successful lead institution USDA/FAS): a) incorporated lessons learned from an earlier PASA[135] that was executed in Ghana to chart a clear path for the project; b) were committed to support local partnerships; and c) expected the project would develop an MEL plan, even though USDA does not require these for PASAs.
2. Over time USAID/WA REGO increased its reliance on ASSESS to execute various types of demand-driven requests that made greater use of the project's own qualified staff. This helped stabilize the project's ability to continue supporting these qualified staff who were critical to the successful management of the CAs being executed by the PASA's extensive network of consultants from various countries.
3. The ASSESS PASA was co-executed with two university-based centers (one in the United States and one in Ghana). This provided a flexible model for tapping the potential of the staff, students, and institutional know-how of both partners in a win–win model that was recognized and appreciated by the wider academic institution, while providing the capacity to manage USAID's needs and expectations.
4. ASSESS had a communication model that helped facilitate a "one project" institutional culture, encouraged direct communication between the project's technical staff and the USAID/WA REGO staff they were supporting (without always going through the chief of party), facilitated the quick identification and resolution of management challenges, and strengthened capacity of individual staff and partner institutions.
5. During the first years, the project benefitted from two new automated financial and award management systems (one at KNUST and one at USDA) that facilitated consolidated project financial reporting to USAID and timely requests for award modifications to maintain financial pipelines at all levels.

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[135] The earlier PASA was the Monitoring, Evaluation, and Technical Support Services II (METSS II) Project, which started in June 2010 (Della E. McMillan, Janet Awopole Y. Tiah, Lynn Hurtak and Saaka Adams. 2023. Monitoring, Evaluation, and Technical Support Services II Project. Final Report. Accra, Ghana: USDA/FAS and KNUST-BIRD for USAID/Ghana).

- Delegation of authority to the chief of party to facilitate the procurement of equipment and logistics for the project start-up in collaboration with partner universities (URI and KNUST) made that critical phase effective and efficient.

6. From the start, URI encouraged the ASSESS team to co-develop an internal SOP document and the ASSESS Commissioned Activity Technical Procedures Manual.
    - The SOP document served as a living document that guided all operations of the project and covered topics like audits, codes of conduct, evaluation protocol, how to file for travel reimbursement or disbursements, how to complete an official vehicle log, human resources, procurement, and financial management procedures.
    - The Commissioned Activity Technical Procedures Manual was more limited in scope and outlined the processes ASSESS needed to implement CAs like information on the steps for implementing a CA and the time frame for executing specific steps of a CA. This was important internally for the ASSESS team and also to set expectations on the workflow between ASSESS and USAID CA requestors.
    - Both documents were subject to a comprehensive staff review and updated every two years.

For Modeling and Implementing Localization

7. One of USAID's localization targets is that by FY 2025 USAID will direct a quarter of its funding directly to local partners. According to a recent (FY 2022) localization progress report, the Program Development and Oversight Sector (to which the ASSESS PASA contributes) is among USAID's weakest performing sectors on localization (Figure 3). If the ASSESS PASA sub-award from USDA (a USG agency) directly to KNUST (a local partner) was considered as direct USAID funding to a local partner (which it is not because PASAs are excluded from USAID's indicator definition), ASSESS as a project would dramatically out-perform the agency-wide result of two percent direct local funding in the Program Development and Oversight Sector in FY 2022. It would also out-perform the results of Economic Growth Sector

8. , all other sectors, and the agency-wide FY 2025 target of 25 percent. KNUST received an annual average of approximately 79 percent of ASSESS PASA funding over 10 years (Annex II.E.3) and 89 percent in FY 2022 (Annex II.E.2).

While other sectors measured in the USAID localization progress report show an upward trend of direct local funding from FY 2020 to FY 2022, the Program Development and Oversight Sector does not (Figure 3). Meanwhile, KNUST's share of ASSESS funding increased from 40 percent in FY 2015 to 96 percent, 83 percent, and 89 percent in FY 2020, FY 2021, and FY 2022, respectively, showing a strong positive trend (Annex E.2). In addition to the theoretical case of the ASSESS PASA's contribution to USAID's direct local funding metric, ASSESS strongly achieved one of the 14 good practices for USAID's new Locally Led Programs indicator (good practice number eight: "non-local recipients demonstrate good faith effort to maximize sub-awards to local organizations"[136]).

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[136] USAID. 2024. Measuring Programs on Localization. USAID Performance Indicator Reference Sheet. Indicator name: Locally Led Programs. Good practice number 8 (out of 14 good practices identified in the Performance Indicator Reference Sheet for the Locally Led Programs Indicator). Washington, DC: USAID. https://www.usaid.gov/localization/measurement or https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/2023-07/Public%20Copy%20of%20Locally%20Led%20Programs%20PIRS_1.pdf.

Figure 3. Direct USAID Local Funding by Sector (FY 2020–FY 2022)
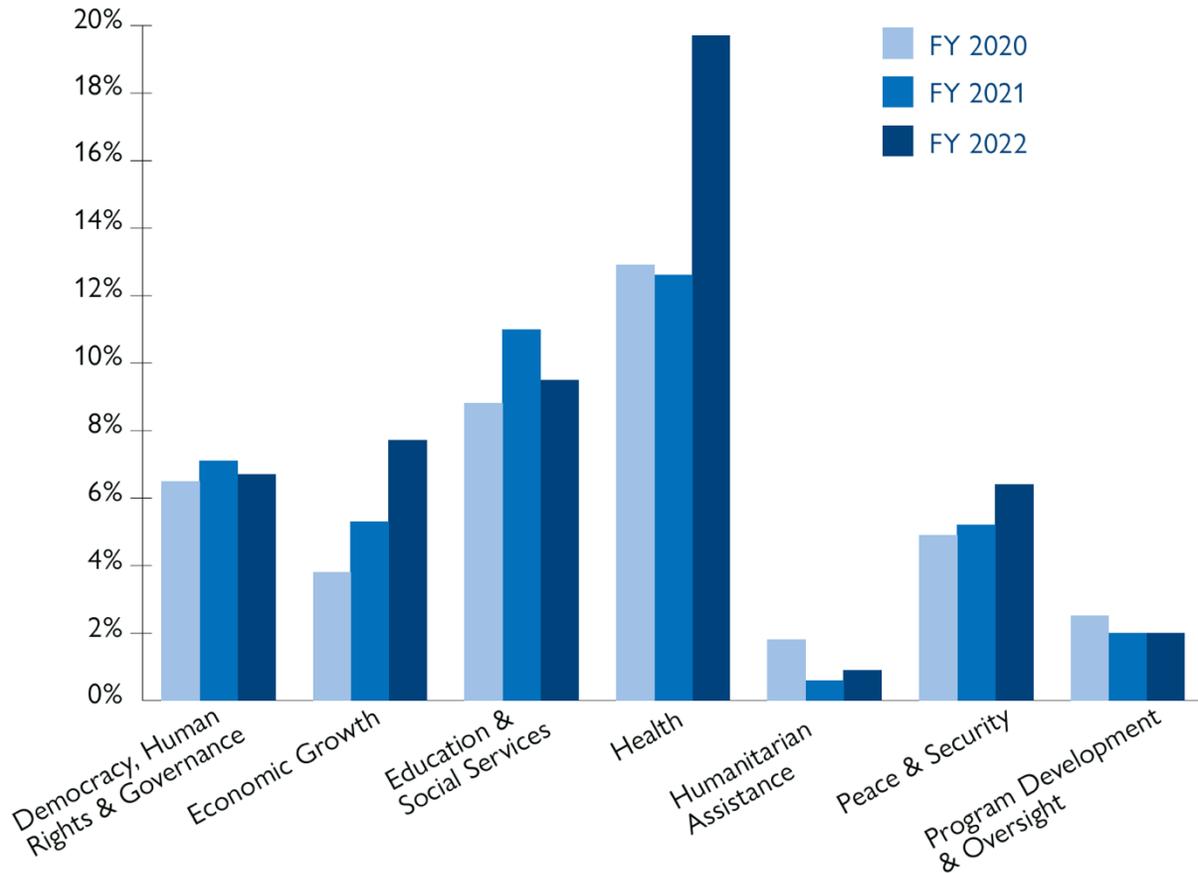
Source: USAID. 2023. Moving Toward a Model of Locally Led Development FY 2022 Localization Progress Report. Washington, DC: USAID.

6.2. Lessons Learned

6.2.1. Sub-IR 1: Recommendations From Evaluations and Studies Operationalized

1. Balance trade-offs between learning and innovation to ensure that the evaluation process is dynamic, allowing for continuous learning while fostering innovation in evaluation methodologies and approaches.
2. Invest adequate time and resources in the pre-implementation phase of the evaluation and studies work plans in order to:
   - a) Conduct a thorough search for qualified experts, especially for the team lead role as that remains critical to the success of evaluations and studies; and b) consider widening the search through budgeting for advertisement on platforms like Devex and ReliefWeb.
   - Conduct a thorough background check including reviewing writing samples and reference checks for all consultants.
   - Conduct brief interviews with experts before signing contracts to further enhance the overall quality of the team selection process.
3. Recognize the significance of team dynamics and provide opportunities for team harmonization toward common objectives.

4. Appoint an experienced evaluation or project management expert from the MEL platform to manage the evaluation team. Ensure that the MEL platform project management expert participates in the expert teams' initial working sessions in order to: a) ensure a comprehensive understanding of the evaluation process by the evaluation team; and b) facilitate real-time adjustment and improvement in the evaluation's methodology, including correct application of evaluation tools, techniques, and relevant protocols.
5. Implement mechanisms to enhance the detection of early-warning signals of poor report quality and delays in submission in order to identify actionable recommendations that might need USAID approval such as extending the original timelines.
6. Ensure that all reports undergo a thorough review by the MEL platform staff, and a compliance check as well as rigorous editing and formatting to refine the presentation of results before submission to USAID.
7. Institutionalize a stakeholder engagement process through a PhD review committee at the project's local university core partner involving USAID staff. This committee could play an advisory role for ongoing and future PhD research (similar to how the Trade Team participated in the review of the COVID-19 PhD applied research). The aim of this committee is to formally engage USAID and industry partners with the local university partner right from the conceptualization stage of research studies so that they are designed to address key knowledge gaps faced by the sectors.

6.2.2. Sub-IR 2: Availability of Information for Decision Making Increased

1. Well-planned in-person, virtual, and hybrid (i.e., combination of in-person and virtual) events are an effective, low-cost mechanism for disseminating information to stakeholders and involving them in joint decision making with USAID's regional offices.
2. Given the complexity and geographical dispersion of the USAID offices, regional partners, and IPs involved in USAID current and projected events, it is important for USAID to have a standard set of planning tools, protocols, and guides for in-person and virtual event design, execution, and post-event evaluation.
3. Having a well thought-out strategy for identifying, onboarding, and supervising qualified local consultants improves event quality, efficiency, and programmatic outcomes.
4. All stakeholders must be involved in the development of the learning event and regional roundtable agendas to facilitate adoption of the lessons that emanate from these meeting platforms.

6.2.3. Sub-IR 3: Performance Data Collection and Reporting Improved

1. A well-planned virtual MEL training program offers a low-cost, effective alternative to in-person training for IP staff and USAID-supported regional partners.
2. To be effective on a regional scale with multiple audiences, these MEL training programs should be guided by:
   - An initial TNA; and
   - A standard planning process outlined in a training guide for: a) the design, production, and review of the training modules; b) presenting the modules; and c) facilitating stakeholder feedback both during and after the event.
3. Care must also be taken to ensure that all of the training tools, templates, and guides are rooted in ADS requirements and approved USAID MEL protocols.

4. MEL platforms should be adaptable to changes in USAID reporting mechanisms[137] and technology to ensure continued effectiveness.
5. Setting clear targets for training activities helps measure the impact and success of capacity building initiatives.

6.2.4. Sub-IR 4: Requested Support Provided to Enhance USAID's Performance

1. Regional MEL programs (like ASSESS) provide an effective, flexible mechanism for USAID regional offices to provide both short-term and longer-term TA and M&E support to regional institutions through an existing award that can complement and/or provide an alternative to for-profit contracts.
2. The effectiveness of a regional MEL mechanism hinges on the platform's willingness and ability to:
   - Design a proactive strategy that will facilitate the identification, onboarding, orientation, and backstopping of qualified local and international consultants; and
   - Establish clear SOWs and guidance that define the roles of these consultants and their obligations to the institution that is hosting them as well as the MEL platform.
3. Having owner-led approaches in the capacity strengthening of regional institutions[138] is key for ensuring ownership and sustainability.

6.2.5. Cross-Cutting Factors That Contributed to ASSESS' Achievements

For Programming

1. Develop clear PASA SOWs (to advertise future initiatives) and final agreement documents that incorporate programming and management lessons learned from similar agreements in the recent past.
2. Even though USDA does not require its PASAs to develop an MEL plan, it is wise to do so (as USAID and USDA did in the ASSESS agreement) in order to: a) clarify the standards against which a project will be measured; and b) integrate this requirement into any new PASA SOW and/or final signed agreement with an IP as was done by USDA and USAID for ASSESS.
3. It is also important to consider how the MEL platform's core team's technical expertise, strong understanding of USAID's needs and approaches, and established working can be capitalized on to execute a wide range of activities and services that do not require external consultants.
4. Encourage USAID/WA REGO and USAID's bilateral offices in West Africa to explore the opportunities of linking university-based centers in the United States with university-based centers in Africa who work in similar areas to strengthen their capacity to support the design and implementation.
5. Encourage new programs to adopt and maintain an intentional communication model with all of the local and international partners and USAID.
6. Encourage MEL platforms that collaborate with university-based partners in West Africa to identify ways they can help strengthen the capacity of their local partners to adopt automated financial and award systems that facilitate project management that comply with their own university's systems.
7. U.S. university-based partners that collaborate with university-based partners in West Africa should be encouraged to co-develop and regularly review and update SOPs to document realistic procedures, set realistic expectations, and provide transparency in the key implementation, reporting, and compliance processes within the project team. These types of

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[137] Such as the recent migration to the DIS platform.
[138] Such as ECOWAS, UEMOA, CORAF/WECARD, CILSS, etc.

guiding documents provide a basis for effective negotiating, planning, and managing dynamic, flexible, timely, cost-effective, and compliant service provision.

For Modeling and Implementing Localization

8. Encourage USAID to use flexible award mechanisms with a strong local component for service provision on program development and oversight that allow regional and bilateral missions to respond to their emerging needs and the needs of their IPs, regional partners, and multilateral partners. Consider developing a hybrid partnership with a non-USAID mechanism like a USDA PASA that has greater flexibility than a contract and that can capitalize on USDA's relationship with U.S. land grant and sea grant public universities to partner with and strengthen the capacity of local public universities to administer USAID resources and deliver programming that provides quality value-added services to USAID and local systems.
9. Anticipate the enabling conditions needed for successful localization of quality service provision on flexible mechanisms (like the ASSESS PASA) including: a) a U.S. university consortium partner experienced in USAID programming, financial and administrative requirements, M&E, and reporting guidelines; b) a local university partner with robust administrative, financial management, and technical expertise, and the reach required (in the case of ASSESS, West Africa region across 21 countries); and c) existence and engagement of experienced centers within both U.S. and local university partner institutions that specialize in outreach and have technical staff other than faculty.

Annex I. ASSESS Performance Indicator Tracking Table—FY 2014–FY 2023 (x/y: x achieved; y target)[139]

Performance Indicator	Reporting Frequency	FY 14	FY 15	FY 16	FY 17	FY 18	FY 19	FY 20	FY 21	FY 22	FY 23	LOA[140]
IR: Body of knowledge and evidence for improved resource allocation, policy advocacy, and program planning increased												
IR-Level Outcome Indicator 1[141]**:** Percentage of USAID designs that are informed by ASSESS evaluations and studies	Biennially (every two years)	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	16%/30% (53% of target)	n/a	32%/30% (107% of target)	32%/30% (107% of target)
Sub-IR 1: Recommendations from evaluations and studies operationalized												
Outcome Indicator 1.1[142]**:** Percentage of approved evaluation reports for which actions have been taken or implemented	Biennially (every two years)	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	82%/90% (91% of target)	n/a	83%/90% (92% of target)	83%/90% (92% of target)
Output Indicator 1.2: Number of evaluation and studies reports produced	Quarterly	14/14 (100% of target)						4/6 (67% of target)	0/6 (0% of target)	4/6 (66% of target)	7[143]/3 (133% of target)	29/36 (81% of target)
Output Indicator 1.3: Number of evaluations and study reports approved	Quarterly	6[144]/7 (86% of target)						1/1 (100% of target)	0/1 (0% of target)	1/1 (100% of target)	4/3 (133% of target)	12/13 (92% of target)

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[139] FY 2014–FY 2019 results and targets were later combined due to indicator review in FY 2020. For this reason, there is no annual figure for the individual years.

[140] LOA data for disaggregation were not given due to absence of disaggregation for FY 2014–FY 2020 indicators.

[141] This indicator measures the percentage of programs/projects in USAID/WA REGO's portfolio whose design, planning, modification, or adjustments (including mid-course corrections) were informed by evidence from ASSESS activities—not just evaluations and studies. This broader mandate led to the current formulation of the indicator. The previous formulation was "percentage of new project designs that are informed by ASSESS evaluations and studies." The numerator represents the results achieved (in percentage), and the denominator represents the target (in percentage) for this indicator. In computing the targets and achieved results, the numerator used is the total number of programs/projects in USAID/WA REGO's portfolio whose designs have been informed by ASSESS's activities. The denominator used in computing the targets and achieved results is the total number of programs/projects in USAID/WA REGO's portfolio since ASSESS's inception. The methodology employed for this survey involved qualitative inputs from selected participants, primarily through key informant interviews.

[142] This indicator measures the percentage of approved evaluation and study reports for which USAID has taken actions in relation to implementing recommendations. The numerator represents the results achieved (in percentage), and the denominator represents the target (in percentage) for this indicator. In computing the targets and achieved results, the numerator used is the total number of evaluation and study reports approved by USAID for which specific actions have been taken. The denominator used in computing the targets and achieved results is the total number of evaluation and study reports approved by USAID. The methodology employed for this survey involved qualitative inputs from selected participants, primarily through key informant interviews.

[143] This number includes the three COVID-19 applied research studies completed by the KNUST PhD candidates.

[144] The only evaluation report for which a written approval was not received is the final performance evaluation of the USAID/WA Energy Portfolio (2009–2014) conducted in FY 2015, at the request of the USAID/WA Energy Team.

Performance Indicator	Reporting Frequency	FY 14	FY 15	FY 16	FY 17	FY 18	FY 19	FY 20	FY 21	FY 22	FY 23	LOA[140]
Output Indicator 1.4: Number of approved evaluation reports published on the USAID DEC	Quarterly			6/6 (100% of target)				1/1 (100% of target)	0/0 (0% of target)	1/1 (100% of target)	4/4 (100% of target)	12/12 (100% of target)
Sub-IR 2: Availability of information for decision making increased												
Outcome Indicator 2.1: Percentage of approved evaluation reports published on the USAID DEC[145]	Semi-annually			100%/100% (100% of target)				100%	0%/100% (0% of target)	100%/100% (100% of target)	100%/100% (100% of target)	100%/100% (100% of target)
Output Indicator 2.2: Number of dissemination workshops and learning events organized	Quarterly			22/37 (59% of target)				1/3 (33% of target)	5/5 (100% of target)	5/5 (100% of target)	14/2 (700% of target)	47/52 (90% of target)
Output Indicator 2.3: Number of communication products developed	Quarterly			11/11 (100% of target)				20/15 (133% of target)	18/17 (106% of target)	12/17 (71% of target)	12/8 (150% of target)	74/68 (109% of target)
Sub-IR 3: Performance data collection and reporting improved												
Output Indicator 3.1: Number of MEL support activities implemented (Total)	Quarterly			6/6 (100% of target)				3/3 (100% of target)	3/3 (100% of target)	1/3 (33% of target)	5/1 (500% of target)	18/16 (113% of target)
Output Indicator 3.2: Number of IPs receiving MEL support (Total)	Quarterly			6/8 (75% of target)				3/6 (50% of target)	3/3 (100% of target)	1/3 (100% of target)	1/1 (100% of target)	14/21 (67% of target)
Sub-IR 4: Requested support provided to enhance USAID's performance												
Output Indicator 4.1: Number of other support services provided	Quarterly			181/181 (100% of target)				56/27	22/25 (88% of target)	28/25 (112% of target)	10/12 (83% of target)	297/270 (110% of target)

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[145] This indicator measures the percentage of approved evaluation reports published on the USAID DEC. The numerator represents the results achieved (in percentage), and the denominator represents the target (in percentage) for this indicator. In computing both the targets and achieved results, the numerator used is the total number of evaluation reports published on the USAID DEC. The denominator used in computing both the target and achieved results is the total number of approved evaluation reports.

Performance Indicator	Reporting Frequency	FY 14	FY 15	FY 16	FY 17	FY 18	FY 19	FY 20	FY 21	FY 22	FY 23	LOA[140]
								(207% of target)				
Cross-cutting (new commissioned activities)[146]												
Cross-cutting Output Indicator 5.1: Number of new commissioned activities implemented	Quarterly		235/155 (152% of target)					26/43 (61% of target)	17/17 (100% of target)	5/17 (29% of target)	9/15 (60% of target)	292/240 (122% of target)
Cross-cutting Output Indicator 5.2: Number of experts recruited to implement commissioned activities (Total)	Quarterly		78/131 (60% of target)					8/9 (89% of target)	13/20 (65% of target)	23/20 (115% of target)	11/10 (110% of target)	133[147]/190 (70% of target)

Source: ASSESS team, based on PASA records. November 2023, updated and revised May 8, 2024.

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[146] New commissioned activities refers to activities that were requested in a particular fiscal year.

[147] This figure is lower than expected because USAID/WA REGO decreased its annual requests for evaluations and increased its request for other types of support that required a smaller number of external consultants.

Annex II. ASSESS Management, Finance, and M&E

Annex II.A. ASSESS Organigram (December 2023)
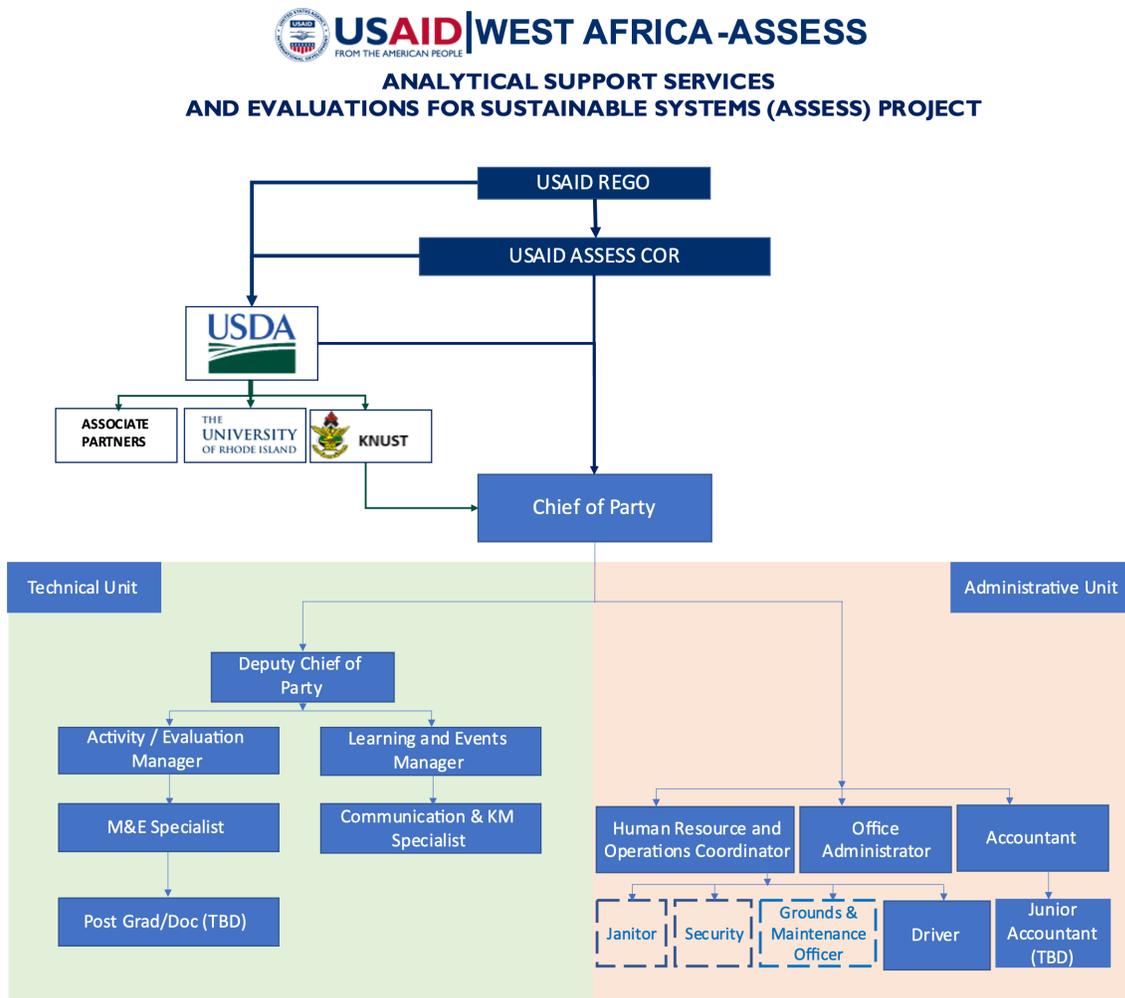
#	STAFF NAME	SEX (M/F)	POSITION	FY 14	FY 15	FY 16	FY 17	FY 18	FY 19	FY 20	FY 21	FY 22	FY 23	FY 24
1	Claire Hazoume	F	Administrations and Operations Officer			X								
2	Debbie Lartey	F	Office Manager	X	X									
3	Emmanuel Arnold Fletcher	M	Activity Manager	X										
4	Joan Bariya Dzansi	F	Bilingual Administrative Assistant		X									
5	Carlos Asare-Okoh	M	Junior Accountant			X								
6	Muttah Abubakar	M	Junior Accountant		X		X							
7	Nafisa Antaru Yussif	F	Administrative Assistant	X	X									
8	Olive Thiong'O	F	Communications Specialist	X										
9	Abdourahmane Ba	M	Chief of Party	X	X	X	X							
10	Barbara Serwaa Arthur	F	M&E Specialist	X	X	X	X	X	X					
	Barbara Serwaa Arthur	F	M&E Manager						X	X	X			
	Barbara Serwaa Arthur	F	Deputy Chief of Party									X	X	X
11	Seyram Kofi Loh	M	GIS Specialist		X	X								
12	Godfred Wagba	M	Driver	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
13	Selina Owusu	F	Temporary Receptionist						X	X				
14	Meimuna Diakite	F	Bilingual Receptionist		X	X	X	X	X					
	Meimuna Diakite	F	Bilingual Logistics and Operations Coordinator						X	X	X	X		
	Meimuna Diakite	F	Human Resource and Operations Coordinator									X	X	X
15	Nana Fredua Agyeman	M	Activity and Evaluation Specialist			X	X	X	X	X	X			

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[148] The table above provides insight on the staff recruited since the inception of the PASA until closeout. Staff who had shown great potential during the life of the PASA were put on job rotations to improve their skills in new areas. Staff were given opportunities to brainstorm on tasks assigned to them, which increased innovation and overall job satisfaction. As a result, various staff, as appropriate, were assigned to new responsibilities, which resulted not only in title changes but also promotion to managerial roles with expanded job responsibilities. As staff contracts were modified, upward adjustments were equally made to their renumeration to match their level of performance. This culture of recognition helped in the management and retention of top talents and increased employee engagement and high performance. Appraisals were conducted annually to ensure staff job descriptions were true to their purpose. Some resignations were due to staff acquiring new jobs directly with USAID (one), while three resignations were because of staff acquiring jobs on other USAID-funded projects.

#	STAFF NAME	SEX (M/F)	POSITION	FY 14	FY 15	FY 16	FY 17	FY 18	FY 19	FY 20	FY 21	FY 22	FY 23	FY 24
16	Regina Nana Araba Gyeswah Danquah	F	Administration and Operations Officer			X	X	X	X					
	Regina Nana Araba Gyeswah Danquah	F	Administration and Resources Manager							X	X	X	X	
17	Nana Yaa Akyaa Owusu	F	Junior Accountant					X	X	X	X	X		
	Nana Yaa Akyaa Owusu	F	Accountant									X	X	X
18	Justice Odoi	M	Chief of Party				X	X						
19	Jennifer Tchorly-Boadi	F	Events Planning Specialist					X	X	X	X			
	Jennifer Tchorly-Boadi	F	Learning and Events Manager									X	X	X
20	Patrick Koomson	M	M&E Specialist						X	X	X			
	Patrick Koomson	M	Activity and Evaluation Manager								X	X	X	X
21	Daniel Opoku Denkyirah	M	Administrative Assistant						X	X	X	X		
	Daniel Opoku Denkyirah	M	Office Administrator									X	X	X
22	Fedelis Dadzie	M	M&E Specialist					X						
	Fedelis Dadzie	M	Chief of Party						X	X	X			
23	Joseph Azuntaaba	M	Budget Analyst					X						
24	Oswald Suonbai-Kyi	M	Communication and Knowledge Management Specialist						X	X	X			
25	Matthew Dally	M	Chief of Party								X			
26	Justice Ajaari	M	M&E Specialist								X	X		
27	Mavis Enyoman Donkor	F	Communication and Knowledge Management Specialist									X	X	X
28	Nene A. Akwetey-Kodjoe	M	Chief of Party								X	X		
29	Charles Nornoo	M	Chief of Party									X	X	X
30	Michael Ashiteye	M	M&E Specialist									X	X	X
31	Samuel Arku Korsah	M	Junior Accountant										X	X
African Center of Excellence (ACE) STAFF														
1	Claire Hazoume	F	ACE Coordinator	X	X									
2	Thompson Dzegblor	M	ACE Training Assistant	X	X									

#	STAFF NAME	SEX (M/F)	POSITION	FY 14	FY 15	FY 16	FY 17	FY 18	FY 19	FY 20	FY 21	FY 22	FY 23	FY 24
3	Anthony Yeboah Acheampong	M	Grounds Maintenance Officer	X	X									
4	Isaac Osah	M	Grounds Maintenance Officer	X	X									

Source: ASSESS team, based on PASA records. December 2023.

Annex II.C. Original ASSESS Results Framework (FY 2015)

ASSESS RESULTS FRAMEWORK

Overall Goal Broader Objective	Systematic and Meaningful Feedback Expanded for Evidence-based Decision Making to Advance Economic Growth and Environmental Resiliency
Activity Purpose Intermediate Objective	Increased Availability of Analytically Rigorous Evidence of Economic Growth Activities for Improved Resource Allocation, Policy Advocacy, and Program Planning

Sub-Purposes	High Quality Information Collected, Analyzed, and Presented in a Professional Manner	Growing Body of Knowledge on Regional Economic Issues	Capacity of Regional and Local Institutions to Carry Out M&E Strengthened
Outputs Accomplishments (components)	Consistent, Unbiased, and Transparent Evaluations Conducted	Research and Evaluation Findings Disseminated	Increased Responsibilities of Local Organizations in M&E Activities
Input Tasks (thematic)	**External Evaluations** • Performance and Impact Evaluations • Assessment of Economic Growth Programming at DO level • Surveys, Rapid appraisals, Baselines	**Learning Agenda** • Research and Analysis • Information and Knowledge Management • Logistical Support Services	**Capacity Building** • Selection and Assessment of Local Organization • On-the-job Mentorship for Capacity Strengthening • Training and Mentoring Activities
(cross-cutting)	• Strong Project coordination with bilateral Missions and their implementing partners • Collaboration with other USAID implementing partners in the performance of the requirements of the ASSESS Project • Rigorous and analytical approaches of high methodological standards		

Source: ASSESS. 2015. Performance Management Plan (PMP). Accra, Ghana: ASSESS for USAID/WA REGO. Pg. 8.

Annex II.D. ASSESS Performance Indicator Tracking Table—FY 2014–FY 2019[149] (x/y: x achieved; y target)

By	Reporting Frequency	FY 14	FY 15	FY 16	FY 17	FY 18	FY 19	LOA
Program Impact: Evidence-Based Decision Making to Advance Economic Growth and Environmental Resiliency in the West Africa Region								
Program Impact Indicator 1: Percentage of programs/projects in the USAID/WA REGO portfolio with recognized impact evaluations that conclude high evidence-positive impact in West Africa target areas, organizations, and individuals	LOA	TBD[150]						
Program Impact Indicator 2: Improved decision making and planning process at USAID/WA REGO	LOA	TBD						
Program Outcome: Increased Availability of Analytically Rigorous Evidence of Economic Growth Activities for Improved Resource Allocation, Policy Advocacy, and Program Planning								
Program Outcome Indicator 1: Percentage of USAID/WA REGO portfolio programs improved following evidence-based evaluations findings	Annual	TBD						
Program Outcome Indicator 2: Percentage of USAID/WA REGO managers and partners who received and applied relevant evaluation and research findings for decision making	Annual	TBD						
Program Outcome Indicator 3: Percentage of organizations supported by the USG in West Africa that	Annual	TBD						

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[149] As indicated in the report, ASSESS revised its MEL Plan, which included a revision of its results framework and related performance indicators. This table highlights the old set of indicators and the results achieved between FY 2014 and FY 2019 (i.e., prior to the MEL Plan revision).

[150] The 2015 Performance Management Plan listed the baseline measurement of the impact indicators as "TBD" and shaded the target for the other years This is because the actual measurements were dependent on conducting a baseline. The baseline was never conducted. At the point this baseline was being planned, the team realized that the indicators themselves needed to be changed.

| By	Reporting Frequency	FY 14	FY 15	FY 16	FY 17	FY 18	FY 19	LOA
have improved their M&E and results-based management systems for improved decision making and planning								
Program Output 1: High-Quality Information Collected, Analyzed, and Presented in a Professional Manner—Consistent, Unbiased, and Transparent Evaluations Conducted								
Program Output 1 Indicator 1: Number of consistent and unbiased performance evaluations conducted	Quarterly	0/0 (0%)	1/3 (33%)	2/6 (33%)	1/1 (100%)	3/3 (100%)	5/2 (250%)	12/15 (80%)
Program Output 1 Indicator 2: Number of consistent and unbiased impact assessments conducted	Quarterly	0/0 (0%)	0/0 (0%)	0/1 (0%)	0/0 (0%)	0/0 (0%)	0/0 (0%)	0/1 (0%)
Program Output 1 Indicator 3: Number of consistent and unbiased baseline studies conducted in the USAID/WA REGO portfolio with the technical support of ASSESS	Quarterly	0/0 (0%)	1/2 (50%)	1/2 (50%)	0/0 (0%)	0/0 (0%)	0/0 (0%)	2/4 (50%)
Program Output 1 Indicator 4: Number of partnerships established with relevant universities to conduct performance and impact evaluations	Quarterly	3/3 (100%)	0/11 (0%)	0/1 (0%)	2/0 (0%)	0/0 (0%)	0/0 (0%)	5/15 (33%)
Program Output 1 Indicator 5: Number of experts mobilized from partner universities to implement evaluations and support services for the USAID/WA REGO portfolio	Quarterly	4/0 (0%)	4/11 (36%)	11/33 (33%)	5/18 (28%)	1/15 (7%)	3/10 (30%)	28/87 (32%)
Program Output 1 Indicator 6: Number of private experts mobilized to implement evaluations and support services for the USAID/WA REGO portfolio	Quarterly	0/0 (0%)	3/5 (60%)	5/8 (63%)	10/5 (200%)	12/11 (109%)	20/15 (133%)	50/44 (114%)
Program Output 2: Capacity of Regional and Local Institutions to Carry Out M&E Strengthened— Increased Responsibilities of Local Organizations in M&E Activities								

By	Reporting Frequency	FY 14	FY 15	FY 16	FY 17	FY 18	FY 19	LOA
Program Output 2 Indicator 1: Number of local organizations benefitting from ASSESS support on M&E activities	Quarterly	0/0 (0%)	0/2 (0%)	0/3 (0%)	0/0 (0%)	0/5 (0%)	0/5 (0%)	0/15 (0%)
Program Output 2 Indicator 2: Number of certified M&E modules developed by ASSESS	Quarterly	0/0 (0%)	0/2 (0%)	0/2 (0%)	0/0 (0%)	0/2 (0%)	0/2 (0%)	0/8 (0%)
Program Output 2 Indicator 3: Number of local organizations' members who have benefitted from ASSESS M&E capacity building	Quarterly	0/0 (0%)	0/3 (0%)	0/5 (0%)	0/0 (0%)	0/10 (0%)	0/10 (0%)	0/28 (0%)
Program Output 2 Indicator 4: Number of persons who have benefitted from step-down trainings organized by local organizations with ASSESS support	Quarterly	0/0 (0%)	0/15 (0%)	0/25 (0%)	0/0 (0%)	0/50 (0%)	0/50 (0%)	0/140 (0%)
Program Output 2 indicator 5: Number of projects and programs in the USAID/WA REGO portfolio benefitting from ASSESS M&E support	Quarterly	0/0 (0%)	0/2 (0%)	3/3 (100%)	0/0 (0%)	2/2 (100%)	1/3 (33%)	6/10 (60%)
Program Output 3: Growing Body of Knowledge on Regional Economic Issues—Research and Evaluation Findings Disseminated								
Program Output 3 indicator 1: Number of research and evaluation findings disseminated	Quarterly	0/0 (0%)	3/3 (100%)	10/12 (83%)	21/60 (35%)	25/18 (139%)	1/17 (6%)	60/110 (55%)
Program Output 3 Indicator 2: Number of events organized for research and evaluation findings dissemination	Quarterly	0/0 (0%)	1/1 (100%)	1/2 (75%)	7/20 (23%)	8/6 (133%)	1/6 (17%)	20/37 (54%)
Program Output 3 Indicator 3: Number of regional evaluation events organized with the participation of ASSESS	Quarterly	0/0 (0%)	0/0 (0%)	0/0 (0%)	0/0 (0%)	0/2 (0%)	0/0 (0%)	0/2 (0%)
Program Output 3 Indicator 4: Number of evaluations and research papers published through	Quarterly	0/0 (0%)	0/0 (0%)	0/0 (0%)	0/0 (0%)	0/0 (0%)	0/0 (0%)	0/0 (0%)

By	Reporting Frequency	FY 14	FY 15	FY 16	FY 17	FY 18	FY 19	LOA
ASSESS knowledge platform								
ASSESS Project Management: ASSESS Strategy to Support USAID/WA REGO's Portfolio Evaluation, Knowledge Information Dissemination in the Region Conducted in a Timely Manner and Satisfactory to USAID/WA								
ASSESS Project Management Indicator 1: Number of Cas requested by USAID conducted in a timely manner by ASSESS	Quarterly	1/0 (n/a)	12/13 (92%)	22/15 (147%)	46/42 (110%)	111/34 (326%)	43/51 (84)	234/155 (152%)
ASSESS Project Management Indicator 2: Number of reviews and planning sessions organized by ASSESS	Quarterly	1/2 (50%)	2/2 (100%)	3/2 (150%)	3/2 (150%)	2/2 (100%)	2/2 (100%)	13/12 (108%)
ASSESS Project Management Indicator 4: Number of satisfactory reports produced timely by ASSESS	Quarterly	2/2 (100%)	4/4 (100%)	4/4 (100%)	4/4 (100%)	4/4 (100%)	4/4 (100%)	22/22 (100%)

Annex II.E. Estimated Financial Information (FY 2014–FY 2024)

Annex II.E.1. Estimated Annual Financial Percentages by USAID/WA REGO Team and Buy-Ins for ASSESS (FY 2015–FY 2023)

Annual Financial Percentage by REGO Team and Buy-Ins
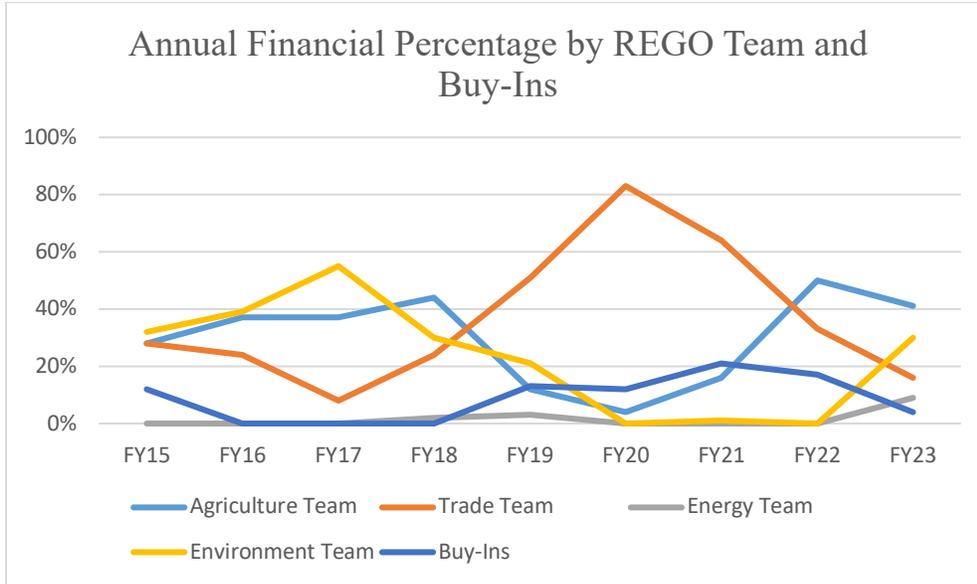
Percent of Financial Resources by USAID/WA REGO Team by Fiscal Year.

Note: The USAID/WA REGO team breakdown is estimated based on the ratios from ASSESS's second semi-annual report financial summaries each year. FY 2014 and FY 2024 were short years of startup and closeout.

Source: Karen Kent, based on ASSESS financial records. April 2, 2024.

Annex II.E.2. Estimated Annual Financial Percentages by Fiscal Year and Partner for ASSESS (FY 2014–FY 2024)

Annual Financial Percentage by Partner

Legend: KNUST, URI, DSU, USDA
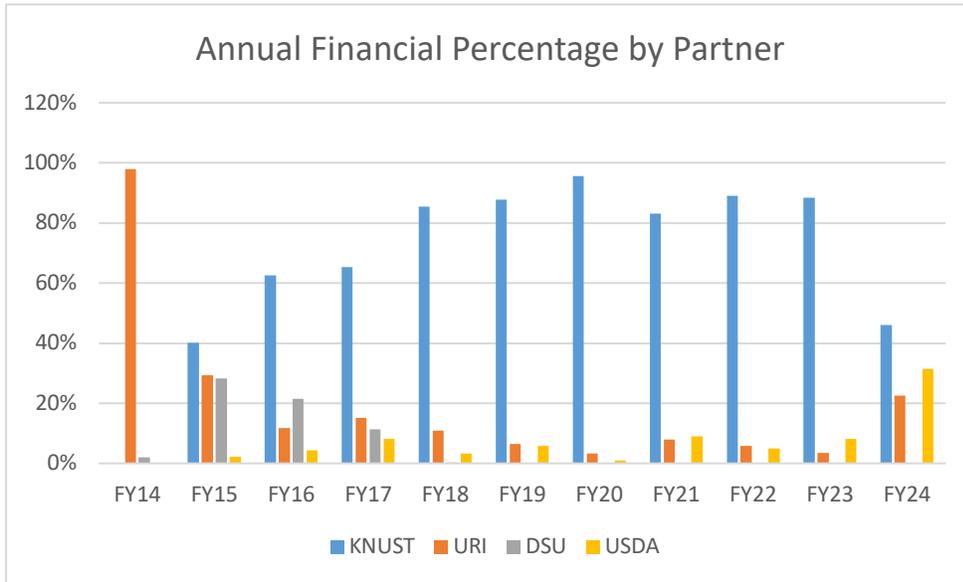
Source: Karen Kent, based on USDA ASSESS financial records. April 2, 2024.

Annex II.E.3. Life of Activity Financial Percentage by Partner for ASSESS

KNUST ■ URI ■ DSU ■ USDA
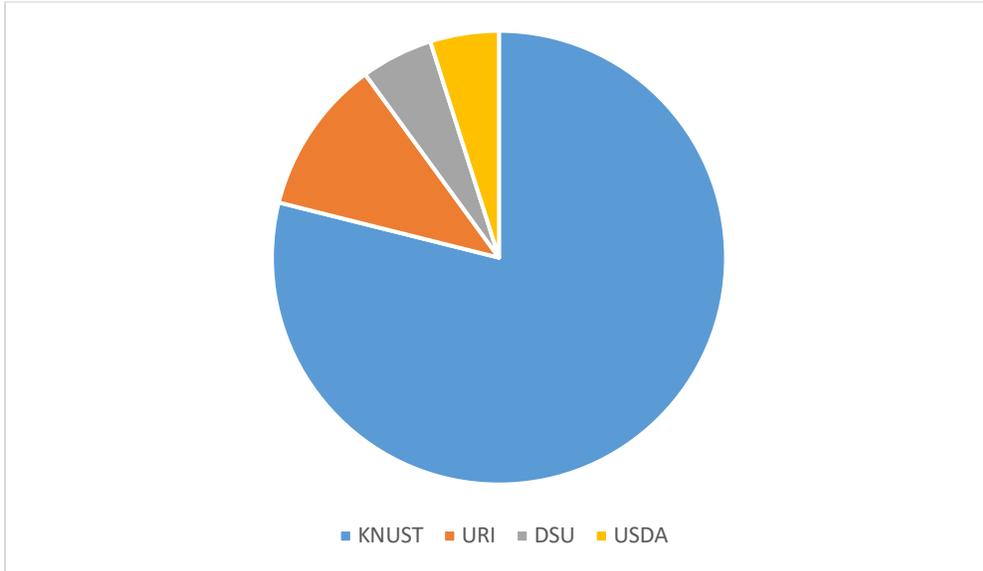
Note: The total annual percentages are based on estimated financial resources as represented by USDA annual expenditures. Percentages of ASSESS financial resources by partner over the life of activity KNUST = 79 percent; URI = 11 percent; USDA = 5 percent; and DSU = 5 percent (over the first five years only).

Source: Karen Kent, based on USDA ASSESS financial records. April 2, 2024.

Annex III. List of Documents
(Note: Publications posted on the USAID DEC are marked with a number sign [#].)

A. ASSESS-Facilitated Evaluations

FY 2023

1.   #Terence Lacey, Noel Kossonou, Ali Diallo, Yacouba Romba, Abdoulaye Falla, and Kofi Asiedu (secondary reviewer). 2023. *West Africa Trade and Investment Hub Midterm Performance Evaluation*. Final Report. Accra, Ghana: ASSESS for USAID/West Africa (January), prepared by Analytical Support Services and Evaluations for Sustainable Systems (ASSESS). https://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PA00N494.pdf
2.   #Katrina Makuch, Richard Akromah, Jorge Oliveira, and Sounka Ndiaye. 2023. *Partnership for Agricultural Research, Education and Development (PAIRED) Final Performance Evaluation.* Final Report. Accra, Ghana: ASSESS for USAID/West Africa (February). https://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PA021148.pdf
3.   #Widad Soufi and David Ato Quansah. 2023. *External Evaluation of the ECOWAS Activities Funded Under Power Africa.* Final Report. Accra, Ghana: ASSESS for USAID/West Africa (June).[151]
4.   #Annette Fay, Adrien Mazeau, Sopie Aonon, Idelphonse Elegbe, and Emenique Alladatin. 2023. *Performance Evaluation of USAID/West Africa WASH Portfolio in Benin and Côte d'Ivoire*. Final Report. Accra, Ghana: ASSESS for USAID/West Africa (August). https://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PA021DHN.pdf

FY 2022

5.   #Jindra Cekan/ova, Sandra Basgall, Mohamed Cherif Diarra, and Mouhamadou Guèye. 2022. *Ex Post Evaluation of the USAID/Mali Out of School Youth Project (PAJE NIETA).* Final Report. Accra, Ghana: ASSESS for USAID/West Africa (December). https://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PA00M38S.pdf

FY 2020

6.   #Analytical Support Services and Evaluations for Sustainable Systems (ASSESS), United States Department of Agriculture/Foreign Agriculture Service (USDA/FAS), the University of Rhode Island (URI), and the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (KNUST). 2020. *Midterm Evaluation of the AfriCap Program and Final Evaluation of the Capacity-Building Portion of the WA-WASH Program.* Final Report. Accra, Ghana: ASSESS for USAID/West Africa (March). https://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PA00WJX4.pdf

FY 2019

7.   #Richard Volk, Frederick Ato Armah, and Abdoulaye Diame. 2019. *Midterm Performance Evaluation West Africa Biodiversity and Climate Change Program/Sierra Leone Coastal Landscape Complex.* Final Report. Accra, Ghana: ASSESS for USAID/West Africa (October). https://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PA00WF5R.pdf

FY 2018

8.   #Curtis Jolly, Sounka Ndiaye, Boureima Sanon, Abdourahmane Ba, Barbara Arthur, and Nana Fredua-Agyeman. 2018. *West Africa Cotton Partnership Project (WACPP).* Final Report. Accra, Ghana: ASSESS for USAID/West Africa (July). https://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PA00T7TV.pdf

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[151] This report, although published on the DEC, is only accessible to usaid.gov users.

9.	#Gérard C. Zoundji and Espérance Zossou. 2018. *Final Evaluation of the West Africa Food Security Partnership (WAFSP) Program.* Final Report. Peace Corps (December). https://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PA00X2J4.pdf

FY 2017

10.	#Cécile Laborderie, Kwabena Biritwum Nyarko, and Brama Koné. 2017. Midterm Evaluation of the Sanitation Service Delivery (SSD) Project. Final Report. Accra, Ghana: ASSESS for USAID/West Africa (August). https://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PA00N4Z5.pdf

FY 2016

11.	#Fred T. Davies, Musa Mbenga, Cheikh Tidiane Sarr, Richard Akromah, and Sounka Ndiaye. 2016. *Midterm Evaluation of the West Africa Seed Program (WASP).* Final Report. Accra, Ghana: ASSESS for USAID/West Africa (August). https://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PA00MNHW.pdf

FY 2015

12.	Phillip LeBel and Emmanuel Wendsongre Ramde. 2015. *Final Performance Evaluation of the USAID West Africa Energy Portfolio 2009-2014.* Final Report. Accra, Ghana: ASSESS for USAID/West Africa (November).

FY 2014

13.	Curtis Jolly, Aminata Niane Badiane, Guy Francis Fievez, and Ababacar Kane. 2014. *Mid-Term Performance Evaluation of the West Africa Fertilizer Program (WAFP).* Final Report. Accra, Ghana: ASSESS for USAID/West Africa (December).

B. ASSESS-Facilitated Assessments and Surveys

FY 2022

14.	Professor Kofi Fred Asiedu. 2022. West Africa Regional Economic Growth Office Bridge Analysis. Final Report. Accra, Ghana: ASSESS for USAID/West Africa (February).
15.	Daouda Sakho and Christel Annequin. 2022. Private Sector Landscape Assessment for USAID/ Côte d'Ivoire. Final Report. Accra, Ghana: ASSESS for USAID/West Africa (March).

FY 2021

16.	Dr. Vijitha M. Eyango and Mr. Trah Siagbe. 2021. *Informal Strategic Plan Gender Analysis Report for USAID Côte d'Ivoire.* Final Report. Accra, Ghana: ASSESS for USAID/West Africa (November 9).

FY 2020

17.	Ali Diallo, Zacharie Badini, Yacouba Romba, Bourahima Sidikou Gade, Hawa Guira Bissiri, and Mahaman Bachar. 2020. *Investment and Partnership Landscape Assessment in Burkina Faso and Niger.* Final Report. Accra, Ghana: ASSESS for USAID/West Africa (February).
18.	Christiana George. 2020. *Gender Analysis Report for the USAID/WA REGO GFSS Design.* Final Report. Accra, Ghana: ASSESS for USAID/West Africa (March).

19.   #Patricia T. Morris. 2020. *USAID West Africa Region Gender Analysis.* Final Report. Accra, Ghana: ASSESS for USAID/West Africa (April). https://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PA00Z2S6.pdf
20.   #Sara Johansson de Silva. 2020. *USAID West Africa Region Youth Analysis.* Final Report. Accra, Ghana: ASSESS for USAID/West Africa (June). https://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PA00Z2MP.pdf
21.   #Stephanie Haile. 2020. Resilience Analysis Towards the Development of the USAID/WA Regional Development Cooperation Strategy. Final Report. Accra, Ghana: ASSESS for USAID/West Africa (June). https://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PA00Z2MN.pdf
22.   Sara Johansson de Silva. 2020. *USAID West Africa Region Private Sector Assessment.* Final Report. Accra, Ghana: ASSESS for USAID/West Africa (September).

FY 2019

23.   Leslie Casely-Hayford, Samuel Awinkene Atintono, Millicent Kaleem, and Jones Agyapong Frimpong. 2019. *Assessment of Low Cost Private Schools in FtF/RING II Districts in Northern Ghana.* Final Report. Accra, Ghana: ASSESS for USAID/West Africa (November).

FY 2018

24.   Analytical Support Services and Evaluations for Sustainable Systems (ASSESS), United States Department of Agriculture/Foreign Agriculture Service (USDA/FAS), the University of Rhode Island (URI), and the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (KNUST). 2018. *Assessment of the Pilot Program for Reporting Monitoring and Resolving Non-Tariff Barriers using the Online E-Platform.* Final Report. Accra, Ghana: ASSESS for USAID/West Africa (July).

FY 2017

25.   Aminata Niane Badiane, Souley Mamane, Kam Dieudonne, Seini Mahamadou, Sounka Ndiaye, Ngaye Tordina, Hamidou Tiendrébéogo, Yaw Amo Sarpong, André Kone, Barbara S. Arthur, Brahima Cissé, Shirley Kore, and Evelyn Ayivor. 2017. *CILSS Intra-Regional Trade Monitoring Program.* Final Report. Accra, Ghana: ASSESS for USAID/West Africa (May).

FY 2016

26.   Jacob Alhassan Hamidu, Robert Aidoo, Samuel Scott, Gavino Puggioni, Liliana Maria Gonzalez, Yaw Amo Sarpong, Gabriel De Pace, Richard Yaw Ansah, Patrick H.Y. Adzovor, and Vitus Bobrnuo. 2016. *USDA - FFPr Ghana Poultry Value Chain Projects GPP - AMPLIFIES Baseline Study Final Report.* Final Report. Accra, Ghana: ASSESS for USAID/West Africa (October).

FY 2015

27.   Curtis M. Jolly, Michael H. Casson Jr., Gavino Puggioni, Simon Cudjoe Fialor, James Tobey, Joseph Magnus Frimpong, and Abdourahmane Ba. 2015. *Trade Hub and African Partners Network Project: Review of Baseline Methodology.* Final Report. Accra, Ghana: ASSESS for USAID/West Africa (January).

C. ASSESS Applied Research (PhD Dissertations)

FY 2024

28.   Cynthia A. Chichi. 2023. COVID-19 and the apparel industry in Ghana: A Contextual Analysis of Operational Challenges and Socio-economic Impact. Kumasi, Ghana. (November).

29.	Eunice Owusu Antwi. 2023. Repurposing and Policy Direction of the Ghana Apparel Industry in the Face of Pandemics: COVID-19 in Focus. Kumasi, Ghana. (November).
30.	Raymond Tachie. 2024. Assessing COVID-19 Shocks Along the Fresh Mango Value Chain in Ghana: Coping Strategies and Impacts. Kumasi, Ghana. (March)

D. ASSESS-Facilitated Monitoring

FY 2024

31.	Analytical Support Services and Evaluations for Sustainable Systems (ASSESS). 2023. *Virtual Workshops on Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning (MEL).* Final Report. Accra, Ghana: ASSESS for USAID/West Africa (October).

FY 2023

32.	Analytical Support Services and Evaluations for Sustainable Systems (ASSESS). 2022. West Africa Regional Roundtable on Localization. Final Report. Accra, Ghana: ASSESS for USAID/West Africa (December).
33.	Analytical Support Services and Evaluations for Sustainable Systems (ASSESS). 2023. *Virtual Workshops on Communication.* Final Report. Accra, Ghana: ASSESS for USAID/West Africa (August).

E. ASSESS-Facilitated Learning Events

FY 2024

34.	Analytical Support Services and Evaluations for Sustainable Systems (ASSESS). 2023. West Africa Trade and Investment Hub Learning Event. Final Report. Accra, Ghana: ASSESS for USAID/West Africa (October).
35.	Analytical Support Services and Evaluations for Sustainable Systems (ASSESS). 2023. Performance Evaluation of USAID/WA WASH Portfolio in Benin LE. Final Report. Accra, Ghana: ASSESS for USAID/West Africa (November).
36.	Analytical Support Services and Evaluations for Sustainable Systems (ASSESS). 2023. Performance Evaluation of USAID/WA WASH Portfolio in Côte d'Ivoire LE. Final Report. Accra, Ghana: ASSESS for USAID/West Africa (November).

FY 2023

37.	Analytical Support Services and Evaluations for Sustainable Systems (ASSESS). 2023. CORAF/PAIRED Learning Event and Co-Creation Event. Final Report. Accra, Ghana: ASSESS for USAID/West Africa (April).

FY 2021

38.	Analytical Support Services and Evaluations for Sustainable Systems (ASSESS). 2021. *Accountability in Education Systems in Sub-Saharan Africa.* Final Report. Accra, Ghana: ASSESS for USAID/West Africa.
39.	Analytical Support Services and Evaluations for Sustainable Systems (ASSESS). 2021. *Local Works Co-Creation Event. Final* Report. Accra, Ghana: ASSESS for USAID/West Africa (February).

FY 2020

40.   #Analytical Support Services and Evaluations for Sustainable Systems (ASSESS). 2020. *Assessment of Low Cost-Private Schools (LCPSs) in the Feed the Future/Resiliency in Northern Ghana (FtF/RING II) Districts in Northern Ghana.* Final Report. Accra, Ghana: ASSESS for USAID/West Africa (February). https://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PA00X417.pdf.

FY 2019

41.   Ethical Apparel Africa. 2019. *Ethical Apparel Africa Report: West Africa Sourcing Event.* Final Report. Accra, Ghana: ASSESS for USAID/West Africa (May).
42.   Analytical Support Services and Evaluations for Sustainable Systems (ASSESS). 2019. *Event Report: Celebrating AGOA Abidjan – Cote d'Ivoire.* Final Report. Accra, Ghana: ASSESS for USAID/West Africa (August 5).

FY 2018

43.   Analytical Support Services and Evaluations for Sustainable Systems (ASSESS). 2018. *Learning Event: Ten Years of USAID Support to the Cotton Sector in West and Central Africa.* Final Report. Accra, Ghana: ASSESS for USAID/West Africa (March).
44.   Analytical Support Services and Evaluations for Sustainable Systems (ASSESS). 2017. *Learning Event Report: West Africa Trade and Investment.* Final Report. Accra, Ghana: ASSESS for USAID/West Africa (November).
45.   Analytical Support Services and Evaluations for Sustainable Systems (ASSESS). 2017. Workshop on Land Use Land Cover: Dissemination and Learning Event. Final Report. Accra, Ghana: ASSESS for USAID/West Africa (December).

FY17

46.   Analytical Support Services and Evaluations for Sustainable Systems (ASSESS). 2017. *Learning Event Report: West Africa Seed Program.* Final Report. Accra, Ghana: ASSESS for USAID/West Africa (July).
47.   Analytical Support Services and Evaluations for Sustainable Systems (ASSESS). 2017. *Support to Dissemination, Learning (DL&T) in Land Use/Land Cover Dynamics.* Final Report. Accra, Ghana: ASSESS for USAID/WA REGO/Environment team (July).

FY 2016

48.   Analytical Support Services and Evaluations for Sustainable Systems (ASSESS). 2016. *ACE Learning Event: Land Use Land Cover Dynamics and Adapting to Climate Change in West Africa.* Final Report. Accra, Ghana: ASSESS for USAID/West Africa (March).

FY 2015

49.   Analytical Support Services and Evaluations for Sustainable Systems (ASSESS). 2015. *Sustainable and Thriving Environments for West Africa Regional Development (STEWARD III) Midterm Evaluation.* Final Report. Accra, Ghana: ASSESS for USAID/West Africa (June).
50.   Analytical Support Services and Evaluations for Sustainable Systems (ASSESS). 2015. *Learning Event: USAID / West Africa Energy Portfolio Evaluation.* Final Report. Accra, Ghana: ASSESS for USAID/West Africa (November).

F. Training Modules Developed by ASSESS

51.   Analytical Support Services and Evaluations for Sustainable Systems (ASSESS). 2023. ASSESS Virtual Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning Workshops: M&E Key Concepts, Approaches, and Methods. Training Module. Accra, Ghana: ASSESS for USAID/West Africa (March).
52.   Analytical Support Services and Evaluations for Sustainable Systems (ASSESS). 2023. ASSESS Virtual Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning Workshops: Monitoring. Training Module. Accra, Ghana: ASSESS for USAID/West Africa (May).
53.   Analytical Support Services and Evaluations for Sustainable Systems (ASSESS). 2023. ASSESS Virtual Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning Workshops: Evaluation. Training Module. Accra, Ghana: ASSESS for USAID/West Africa (June).
54.   Analytical Support Services and Evaluations for Sustainable Systems (ASSESS). 2023. ASSESS Virtual Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning Workshops: Collaborating, Learning and Adapting. Training Module. Accra, Ghana: ASSESS for USAID/West Africa (August).
55.   Analytical Support Services and Evaluations for Sustainable Systems (ASSESS). 2023. "ASSESS Virtual Communication Workshops: Communication Concepts and Theories." Training Module. Accra, Ghana: ASSESS for USAID/West Africa (March).
56.   Analytical Support Services and Evaluations for Sustainable Systems (ASSESS). 2023. "ASSESS Virtual Communication Workshops: Effective Communication Skills Part I." Training Module. Accra, Ghana: ASSESS for USAID/West Africa (April).
57.   Analytical Support Services and Evaluations for Sustainable Systems (ASSESS). 2023. "ASSESS Virtual Communication Workshops: Effective Communication Skills Part II." Training Module. Accra, Ghana: ASSESS for USAID/West Africa (May).

G. Success Stories

58.   Analytical Support Services and Evaluations for Sustainable Systems (ASSESS). 2021. Safeguarding lives and livelihoods in West Africa: USAID's COVID-19 Support to Local Businesses in Ghana. Accra: ASSESS for USAID/West Africa (June)
59.   Analytical Support Services and Evaluations for Sustainable Systems (ASSESS). 2021. USAID's COVID-19 Support to DTRT: Supporting the Apparel Sector in Ghana to Help Fight the COVID-19 Pandemic while Safeguarding Jobs. Accra, Ghana: ASSESS for USAID/West Africa (December).
60.   Analytical Support Services and Evaluations for Sustainable Systems (ASSESS). 2021. Safeguarding Livelihoods in West Africa's Growing Apparel Industry Amidst a Global Pandemic. Accra, Ghana: ASSESS for USAID/West Africa (December).
61.   Analytical Support Services and Evaluations for Sustainable Systems (ASSESS). 2021. USAID's COVID-19 Rapid Response to Blue Skies: Supporting Businesses to Overcome the Challenges of the Pandemic while Safeguarding Jobs. Accra, Ghana: ASSESS for USAID/West Africa (December).

Annex IV. USAID Activities Whose Designs Were Informed by the ASSESS PASA's Activities

A post-evaluation/assessment survey conducted by ASSESS in 2023[152] found that 32 percent[153] of USAID program or activity designs (between 2014 and 2023) had been informed by ASSESS's evaluations and studies. This comprises 11 USAID/WA REGO activities and one USAID/Ghana activity. The table below lists the USAID programs or activities whose designs were informed by ASSESS's work, including evaluations, assessments, learning events, co-creation workshops, support to regional institutions, etc.

Fifty percent of these activities were direct follow-on activities designed based on evaluation outcomes of the previous activities. Two[154] (17 percent) of the activities (i.e., the Low-Cost Private Schools (LCPS) and the Africa Trade & Investment (ATI)) were designed based on outcomes of three ASSESS-led assessments and analyses (see table below). Of the remaining activities, two (17 percent) were a direct result of co-creation events facilitated by ASSESS, one activity (i.e., the West Africa Trade Hub) resulted from the post-evaluation learning event facilitated by ASSESS, while one activity (i.e., ECOWAP) was designed based on the Operational Plan developed by the ASSESS expert embedded in ECOWAS as part of the technical support to regional institutions.

Of the 11 USAID/WA REGO activities whose designs were influenced by ASSESS'   work, three of the activities are managed by the Agriculture Team, one is managed by the Energy Team, three are managed by the Environment Team, with the Trade and Local Works Teams managing two each.

No.	Name of Activity	Activity Duration	Implementing Partner	Link to ASSESS Activities[155]
USAID/WA REGO				
Agriculture				
1.	Enhancing Growth through Regional Agricultural Input Systems (EnGRAIS)	February 2018 to February 2026	International Fertilizer Development Center (IFDC)	Based on findings and recommendations from the West Africa Fertilizer Program (WAFP) evaluation
2.	Partnership for Agricultural Research, Education and Development (PAIRED) in West Africa	June 2017 to December 2022	West and Central Africa Council for Agricultural Research and Development (CORAF)	Based on findings and recommendations from the West Africa Seed Program (WASP) evaluation
3.	Support to the ECOWAS Department of Agriculture's Operational Plan in implementing the ECOWAS Agriculture Policy (ECOWAP)	August 2021 to December 31, 2024	ECOWAS Regional Agency for Agriculture and Food (ARAA)	Based on the Operational Plan developed by the ASSESS expert embedded in ECOWAS
Energy				

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[152] The 2023 post-evaluation/assessment survey was the second survey to be conducted by ASSESS aimed to obtain USAID's feedback on completed evaluations and assessments. The survey assessed aspects of the evaluations/assessments, including utilization of the recommendations. Respondents were mainly USAID A/CORs and team leads from the requesting offices who were involved in the planning and commissioning of the evaluations or assessments. ASSESS conducted the first survey in 2020.
[153] Twelve out of 37 USAID programs had been informed by ASSESS's evaluations and studies.
[154] Out of 12 activities.
[155] This refers to all the activities ASSESS implemented that contributed to or resulted in the design of the 12 activities. They include evaluations, assessments and analyses, learning events, co-creation workshops/events, and technical assistance to regional institutions.

No.	Name of Activity	Activity Duration	Implementing Partner	Link to ASSESS Activities[155]
4.	West Africa Energy Program (WAEP)	July 2019 to July 2024	Deloitte Consulting LLP	Based on findings and recommendations from the evaluation of the West Africa Energy Portfolio (2009–2014) conducted in 2015 and the review of the West Africa Energy Program Theory of Change (TOC) conducted in 2018
Environment				
5.	West Africa Municipal Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (MuniWASH)	September 16, 2019 to September 15, 2024	Tetra Tech (Prime), Population Services International (PSI), and SEGURA Consulting LLC	Based on findings and recommendations from two evaluations: a) Sanitation Services Delivery (SSD) evaluation and; b) AfriCap/WA-WASH evaluation
6.	African Water Association Capacity Building (AfriCap) 2	November 27, 2015 to November 26, 2023	African Water and Sanitation Association (AfWASA)	Based on findings and recommendations from the AfriCap/WA-WASH evaluation
7.	West Africa Biodiversity and Low Emissions Development (WABiLED)	June 30, 2021 to July 19, 2025	Tetra Tech	Based on findings and recommendations from the West Africa Biodiversity and Climate Change (WABICC) evaluation
Trade				
8.	West African Trade & Investment Hub (WATIH)	September 2019 to August 2024	Creative Associates International	Outcome of the Trade Hub learning event in Abuja in 2017 informed the design of this Trade Hub follow-on activity
9.	Africa Trade & Investment (ATI)	September 2021 to September 2026	DAI	Based on insights from: a) the Bridge Analysis; and b) the Private Sector Engagement Analysis conducted (prior to the development of the USAID/WA RDCS 2020–2025)
Local Works				
10.	Connect and Learn for Sustainable Associations (CLOSA)	July 25, 2022 to July 24, 2026	Health Strategy Development Foundation (HSDF) based in Nigeria	Local works co-creation event organized by ASSESS informed the design of this local works activity
11.	West Africa Private Healthcare Federation's: Journey towards	August 8, 2022 to July 7 2025	West Africa Private Healthcare Federation or *Fédération Ouest Africaine du Secteur Privé de la Santé*	Local works co-creation event organized by ASSESS informed the design of this local works activity

No.	Name of Activity	Activity Duration	Implementing Partner	Link to ASSESS Activities[155]
	Sustainability (J2Su[156])		(FOASPS)	
USAID/Ghana				
Education				
12.	Low-Cost Private Schools (LCPSs)	February 2023 to February 2028	Opportunity International	This activity was informed by the LCPS assessment conducted in 2019

Source: ASSESS post-evaluation/assessment surveys (2021 and 2023) and key informant interview with ASSESS COR.

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[156] The J2Su activity is jointly implemented by USAID/WA REGO and the USAID/WA Regional Health Office (RHO).

Annex V. List of Evaluations, Assessments, and Studies Conducted by ASSESS (FY 2014– FY 2023)

Annex V.A. Mid-Term Performance Evaluations Conducted by ASSESS (FY 2014–FY2023)

Fiscal Year (FY)	Title of Activity	Requesting Office
FY 14	Mid-Term Performance Evaluation of the West Africa Fertilizer Program (WAFP)	USAID/WA Agriculture Team
FY 16	Mid-Term Evaluation of the West Africa Seed Program (WASP)	USAID/WA Agriculture Team
FY 17	Mid-Term Evaluation of the Sanitation Service Delivery (SSD) Project	USAID/WA Environment Team
FY 19	Mid-Term Performance Evaluation of the West Africa Biodiversity and Climate Change Program/Sierra Leone Coastal Landscape Complex	USAID/WA Environment Team
FY 20	Midterm Evaluation of the AfriCap Program and Final Evaluation of the Capacity-Building Portion of the WA-WASH Program.	USAID/WA Environment Team
FY 23	West Africa Trade and Investment Hub Mid-Term Performance Evaluation	USAID/WA Trade Team

Source: ASSESS team, based on PASA records. December 2023.

Annex V.B. Final Performance Evaluations Conducted by ASSESS (FY 2014–FY 2023)

Fiscal Year (FY)	Title of Activity	Requesting Office
FY 15	Final Evaluation of the USAID/WA Energy Portfolio (2009–2014)	USAID/WA Energy Team
FY 18	Final Evaluation of the West Africa Cotton Partnership Project (WACPP)	USAID/WA Agriculture Team
FY 18	Final Evaluation of the West Africa Food Security Partnership (WAFSP) Program	Peace Corps, Benin
FY 23	Performance Evaluation of CORAF/PAIRED Components 2 and 3	USAID/WA Agriculture Team
FY 23	Performance Evaluation of USAID/WA WASH Portfolio in Benin and Côte d'Ivoire	USAID/WA Environment Team
FY 23	External Evaluation of the ECOWAS Activities Funded Under Power Africa	USAID/WA Energy Team

Source: ASSESS team, based on PASA records. December 2023.

Annex V.C. Ex-Post Evaluations Conducted by ASSESS (FY 2014–FY 2023)

Fiscal Year (FY)	Title of Activity	USAID Requesting Office
FY 22	Ex-Post Evaluation of the USAID/Mali Out of School Youth Project[157] (2010–2015)	USAID/Mali and USAID/Africa Bureau[158] (AFR)

Source: ASSESS team, based on PASA records. December 2023.

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[157] Also known as PAJE-NIETA (*Projet d'Appui aux Jeunes Entrepreneurs*).
[158] The Bureau for Africa (AFR) is the USAID/Washington operating unit charged with managing USAID's development assistance programs in Africa.

Annex V.D. Assessments and Analyses Conducted by ASSESS (FY 2014–FY 2023)

Fiscal Year (FY)	Title of Activity	Requesting Office
FY 14	Trade Hub Baseline Methodology Review	USAID/WA Trade Team
FY 18	Assessment of the Pilot Program for Reporting Monitoring and Resolving Non-Tariff Barriers Using the Online E-Platform	USAID/WA Trade Team
FY 19	Assessment of Low-Cost Private Schools in FtF/RING II Districts in Northern Ghana	USAID/Ghana Education Team
FY 20	Investment and Partnership Landscape Assessment in Burkina Faso and Niger	USAID/WA Trade Team and USAID/WA RPGO
FY 20	Gender Analysis Report for the USAID/WA REGO GFSS Design	USAID/WA Agriculture Team
FY 20	USAID West Africa Region Youth Analysis**	USAID/WA RPO
FY 20	Resilience Analysis towards the USAID West Africa Regional Development Cooperation Strategy**	USAID/WA RPO
FY 20	USAID West Africa Region Gender Analysis**	USAID/WA RPO
FY 20	USAID West Africa Region Private Sector Engagement Assessment**	USAID/WA RPO
FY 21	Informal Strategic Plan Gender Analysis Report for USAID/Côte d'Ivoire	USAID/Cote d'Ivoire
FY 22	Private Sector Landscape Assessment for USAID/Côte d'Ivoire	USAID/Cote d'Ivoire
FY 22	West Africa Regional Economic Growth Office Bridge Analysis	USAID/WA Trade Team

** These assessments and analyses were conducted in support of the USAID/WA RDCS (2021–2025) development.

Source: ASSESS team, based on PASA records. December 2023.

Annex V.E. Baseline Surveys and Methodology Reviews Conducted by ASSESS (FY 2014–FY 2023)

Fiscal Year (FY)	Title of Activity	Requesting Office
FY 14	Baseline Methodology Review: Trade Hub and African Partners Network Project	USAID/WA Trade Team
FY 16	Baseline Study: USDA FFPr Ghana Poultry Value Chain Projects (GPP and AMPLIFIES)	USDA

Source: ASSESS team, based on PASA records. December 2023.

Annex VI. List of ASSESS Learning Events, Co-Creation Events, Training Workshops, Etc. (FY 2015–FY 2024)

No.	Fiscal Year (FY)	Title of Event	Venue (Country)	USAID Requesting Office
1.	2015	STEWARD Mid-Term Evaluation Dissemination and Learning Event	Ghana	Environment
2.	2015	Final performance evaluation of the USAID West Africa Energy Portfolio (2009–2014) Learning Event	Ghana	Energy
3.	2016	Assessment of USGS mapping of Land Use Land Cover (LULC) Dynamics and Climate Change in West Africa (2011–2015) Learning Event	Ghana	Environment
4.	2016	Mid-Term Evaluation of the West Africa Seed Program (WASP) Learning Event	Ghana	Agriculture
5.	2016	Sanitation Service Delivery Learning Event	Ghana	Environment
6.	2016	USDA Poultry Survey Learning Event	Ghana	USDA
7.	2017	LULC Regional Learning Event in Burkina Faso	Burkina Faso	Environment
8.	2017	LULC Regional Learning Event in Senegal	Senegal	Environment
9.	2017	LULC Regional Learning Event in Ghana	Ghana	Environment
10.	2017	Regional Trade Learning Event	Nigeria	Trade
11.	2017	Brown-Bag Events on Regional Institutions Focusing on: WAPP	Ghana	REGO
12.	2017	Brown-Bag Events on Regional Institutions Focusing on: UEMOA	Ghana	REGO
13.	2017	Brown-bag events on Regional Institutions focusing on: CORAF/WECARD	Ghana	REGO
14.	2017	SSD Program MTE Learning Event	Benin	Environment
15.	2017	AfriCap/WA-WASH Learning Event	Burkina Faso	Environment
16.	2018	Power Africa Summit 2018	Senegal	Energy
17.	2018	Fall Armyworm Workshop in Benin	Benin	Agriculture
18.	2018	Regional Cotton Learning Event	Burkina Faso	Agriculture
19.	2018	Global Food Security Strategy (GFSS) Development Meeting	Ghana	Agriculture
20.	2019	Celebrating AGOA Event and the AGOA Forum in Abidjan	Cote d'Ivoire	Trade
21.	2019	Ethical Apparel Africa (EAA) Sourcing Event in Accra	Ghana	Trade
22.	2019	Communication Training (Bootcamp 1) for REGO IPs	Ghana	REGO
23.	2020	LCPS Evaluation Report Dissemination Event	Ghana	USAID/Ghana Education Office
24.	2021	USAID/Ghana Education Accountability Co-Creation Event	N/A (Virtual)	USAID/Ghana Education Office
25.	2021	USAID/WA Regional Roundtable on Private Equity and Investment Transactions	N/A (Virtual)	Trade
26.	2021	Local Works Virtual Co-creation Event	N/A (Virtual)	REGO
27.	2021	Local Works Solicitation Conference	N/A (Virtual)	REGO
28.	2021	USAID/WA Trade Team Retreat	Ghana	Trade
29.	2022	Regional Roundtable on Decolonization	N/A (Virtual)	Trade
30.	2022	USAID/WA REGO Team Retreat 1	Ghana	REGO
31.	2022	USAID/WA REGO Team Retreat 2	Ghana	REGO
32.	2022	USAID/WA Agriculture Team Retreat	Ghana	Agriculture
33.	2022	USAID/WA Trade Team Retreat	Ghana	Trade
34.	2023	Performance Evaluation of CORAF/PAIRED Components 2 and 3 Learning Event	Senegal	Agriculture

No.	Fiscal Year (FY)	Title of Event	Venue (Country)	USAID Requesting Office
35.	2023	Performance Evaluation of CORAF/PAIRED Components 2 and 3 Co-creation event	Senegal	Agriculture
36.	2023	External Evaluation of ECOWAS Energy Activities Funded by USAID Learning Event	N/A (Virtual)	Energy
37.	2023	West Africa Trade and Investment Hub Learning Event	Nigeria	Trade
38.	2023	Performance Evaluation of USAID/WA WASH Portfolio in Benin and Côte d'Ivoire Benin Learning Event	Benin	Environment
39.	2023	Performance Evaluation of USAID/WA WASH Portfolio in Benin and Côte d'Ivoire CDI Learning Event	Cote d'Ivoire	Environment
40.	2023	MEL Training Workshops for REGO Implementing Partners – Part 1	N/A (Virtual)	REGO
41.	2023	MEL Training Workshops for REGO Implementing Partners – Part 2	N/A (Virtual)	REGO
42.	2023	MEL Training Workshops for REGO Implementing Partners – Part 3	N/A (Virtual)	REGO
43.	2023	MEL Training Workshops for REGO Implementing Partners – Part 4	N/A (Virtual)	REGO
44.	2023	Communication Training Workshops for REGO Implementing Partners – Part 1	N/A (Virtual)	REGO
45.	2023	Communication Training Workshops for REGO Implementing Partners – Part 2	N/A (Virtual)	REGO
46.	2023	Communication Training Workshops for REGO Implementing Partners – Part 3	N/A (Virtual)	REGO
47.	2024	Global Shea Alliance (GSA) Co-Creation Event	Ghana	Agriculture

Source: ASSESS team, based on PASA records. December 2023.

Annex VII. ASSESS Success Stories

Annex VII.A. USAID COVID-19 Support to DTRT

USAID's COVID-19 Support to DTRT: Supporting the Apparel Sector in Ghana to Help Fight the COVID-19 Pandemic while Safeguarding Jobs

Under its Rapid COVID-19 Response initiative, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) provided a grant support of $250,000 to build the capacity of DTRT Apparel to meet the demand for medical grade Personal Protective Equipment (PPEs) from the Government of Ghana as well as safeguard the jobs of factory workers, mainly women and youth. The intervention enabled the apparel manufacturing giant to repurpose its production lines to produce and distribute over 4.5 million units of medical grade PPEs to Ghana's health workers and the public valued at $6,696,084. The support also sustained about 2,003 jobs including 1,273 new recruits (74 percent) and 730 repurposed jobs (61 percent females).

Ordinarily, unemployment and lack of productive endeavors constitute major socio-economic challenges for any region. The difficulties in securing decent wages and productive employment tend to increase the vulnerability of young people and make them susceptible to social vices. In Ghana, the COVID-19 lockdown and economic shut down heightened these problems. Hafsa Acquaye, a 21-year-old secondary school graduate who lives with her mother, was temporarily laid off when the pandemic disrupted the global supply chain. Hafsa joined DTRT when she was 19 years old. Amidst the lockdown and restriction of movement due to the pandemic, her mother, a petty trader, could not earn enough to cater for the family.

"I was so scared that I would never be called back to the factory; I was always contemplating if I had permanently lost my job. As each day passed, we kept wondering how long we were going to survive without a regular source of income. I was praying every day to be called back to the factory so I can work to earn an income to take care of myself and my mum," said Hafsa.

With the support from USAID, factory workers like Hafsa were called back. The factory which was producing knit tops for export to the U.S. market prior to the COVID-19 outbreak quickly pivoted operations to produce medical grade PPEs. The intervention contributed to mitigating the impact of the pandemic on the strained Ghanaian health care system by closing the gap on PPE adequacy for front line health workers. It also came as a boost to the private sector by accelerating competitive import substitution through the production of PPEs locally during the period.

About 80% of the beneficiaries are female and youth with no technical skill prior to being hired. Like Hafsa, these young ones had a unique opportunity to work in the formal sector that did not require professional experience or

21-year old Hafsa Acquaye who used to help at the stitching now sews nose masks at the repurposed production line

formal education. Through the intervention, these young employees responded to the call to participate in the shared burden of curbing the pandemic.

"In some few days after resuming at the Factory, I was re-assigned from being a helper on the stitching lines to learning how to sew. I started to sew nose masks, hazmat suits, and medical scrubs. I felt like a national heroin and an essential worker because only workers classified as essential workers were permitted to move around the town", said Hafsa.

DTRT Apparel (DTRT) Limited, located in Accra, Ghana, is West Africa's largest apparel manufacturing company and a major exporter of apparel garments to the U.S. USAID has been in partnership with DTRT through programs aimed at job creation and social impact. Through the support of USAID, DTRT continued business operations during the peak of the pandemic in Ghana by repurposing their operations from manufacturing T-shirts, Polos, and Fleeces to manufacturing Nose Masks, Hazmat Suits, and Medical Scrubs. These contributed greatly to easing the strain on the Ghana healthcare system.

 DTRT demonstrated business resilience and commitment to societal impact by maintaining Factory operations despite the COVID-19 pandemic. Beyond the lockdown, DTRT continued PPE production and switched back to regular operations without significant hitches. Established to set an example of the industry's ability to drive positive social change, the company continues to invest in its staff and set the pace for excellence in the region. Today, DTRT employs over 2500 people in Accra and has become one of the largest private sector employers in Ghana with about 98% local content.

Annex VII.B. USAID COVID-19 Support to Ethical Apparel Africa

Safeguarding Livelihoods in West Africa's Growing Apparel Industry Amidst a Global Pandemic

The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) through Ethical Apparel Africa (EAA), a locally based sourcing firm with factories in Ghana and Benin, safeguarded the jobs of over 250 people who could have lost their livelihoods during the peak of the COVID-19 pandemic.

As the COVID-19 pandemic hit, garment factories around the world faced widespread order cancellations, ultimately leading to job losses. To avoid this outcome in West Africa, where the emerging clothing manufacturing sector had established a strong growth trend, USAID worked in partnership with EAA to support industry resilience. EAA, USAID and other development partners established a program to manufacture over 50,000 sets of medical scrubs for use by healthcare providers both locally and internationally. This production enabled the beneficiary factories—KAD Manufacturing Ltd and Alfie Designs in Ghana and Africa New Confection (ANC) in Benin to keep operating through a period of uncertainty while EAA worked to confirm continuity of other export orders. It also provided much-needed apparel to healthcare providers on the front lines of the pandemic, including a donation of 5,000 sets to the Ghana Ministry of Health and 10,000 sets to Benin's health ministry.

Ultimately, this effort supported the three factories to safeguard job continuity for over 250 employees. One such employee is Vivian Logbo of ANC, Benin's leading apparel manufacturer.

"During the COVID time, I was able to keep my job thanks to the work at ANC to produce medical scrubs; I am grateful also for the support on transport and food through this hard period", she said.

Workers at ANC were provided with transportation allowances, health awareness sessions, masks, and daily meals during the pandemic. Following this initial support, these three firms have continued to grow over the past year. They now employ a total of 600 individuals, up from 290 when the pandemic emerged. On average, over 65 percent of these employees are women.

Pioneering Manufacture of International Standard Surgical Masks in Ghana Amid a Global Pandemic

With support from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), Ethical Apparel Africa (EAA) launch Ghana's first ISO-7 certified surgical mask production facility, breaking new ground in manufacturing capability.

The emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic sparked a global scramble for medical grade Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), with developing nations in particular struggling to secure reliable supply of certified protective gear for healthcare providers. Foreseeing a long-term need in the West African region for reliable PPE supply chains, EAA conducted extensive research and developed a roadmap to establish a world-class medical-grade surgical mask facility in Ghana. This work was done in partnership with the American National Standards Institute (ANSI), which provided specialized guidance to ensure the surgical masks meet international standards.

With support from USAID, EAA is now making this roadmap a reality. This includes the construction of an ISO-7 certified clean room in Maagrace Garment Industries Limited in Koforidua, Eastern Region, Ghana. This will ensure that masks meet the standards for bacterial filtration efficiency and particulate filtration of the American Society for Testing and Materials (ASTM). Along with establishing this infrastructure, EAA is conducting extensive training at the local factory, Maagrace, where this facility will be launched[1]. EAA and the ANSI are also engaging with the Ghana Standards Authority (GSA) to ensure all local requirements are met and to build local capacity on PPE standard evaluation.

With building and training phases currently underway, EAA expects to produce and test the first locally manufactured surgical grade masks by the end of 2021. Once fully operational, the facility will have the capacity to manufacture up to 1 million masks per month. This will provide a sustainable source of supply of surgical-grade masks for sale locally in Ghana, in the sub-region, and to international markets.

This initiative will also create approximately 35 highly skilled jobs. Employees will be supported to achieve relevant certifications in clean room operation and PPE production. This represents a big step forward for individuals like Senanu, who has been recruited to supervise operations.

Senanu Kofi Anku is being trained to take on the management of Ghana's first surgical mask production unit passing ISO 7 standards

"I am very enthused about this upcoming project, and I am learning a lot to train others and set the ball rolling. I believe our project will be very beneficial to my country Ghana and the sub-region, helping to reduce pressures on relying on imported surgical masks while we produce in Ghana to serve the world", Senanu remarks.

As the first facility of its caliber in Ghana, this surgical mask production unit represents a major step forward in achieving self-sufficiency in local supply of essential PPE, while diversifying sourcing options on the global stage. The trial phase of the facility was recently visited by the President of Ghana Nana Akufo-Addo and the Minister for Trade and Industry Alan Kyerematen. They were taken through the process for auto-making the mask, attaching the ear loops ultrasonically and auto bagging. The cleanroom element will be built once the surgical masks have passed the ASTM standards.

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[1] Note - Some of this training (specifically on clean room operator certification) is also being supported by the UK Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO)

Ethical Apparel Africa is a sourcing and manufacturing company shaping the future of the apparel industry in West Africa. EAA is committed not only to catalyzing export growth but to 'getting it right from the start,' building an industry that prioritizes people as well as profits. Our partner factories go 'beyond compliance' – providing workers with meals, transport, and health education – and are committed to transparency and continuous improvement. EAA's work has been recognized by the London Stock Exchange, Common Objective, Ashoka, and Forbes.

To learn more about EAA visit our website https://www.ethicalapparelafrica.com/press-contact

Annex VII.C. USAID COVID-19 Support to Blue Skies

USAID's COVID-19 Rapid Response to Blue Skies: Supporting Businesses to Overcome the Challenges of the Pandemic while Safeguarding Jobs

A mango farmer and supplier to Blue Skies harvests mangoes from his farm

With the COVID-19 pandemic upending the global economy, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) continues to demonstrate its flexibility and strong leadership to help businesses push through the whirlwind of the pandemic while safeguarding lives and livelihoods. Through a Rapid COVID-19 Response initiative, USAID provided financial assistance of $760,000 to Blue Skies, an export-oriented fruit processing company, to overcome production and trade barriers brought on by the pandemic and sustain the jobs of thousands of people, mainly women and youth in Ghana. Overall, USAID's intervention enabled Blue Skies to sustain the livelihoods of 2,095 young men and women (61 percent female and 76 percent youth); resulted in increased trade where Blue Skies exported over 6,200 MT of fresh cut fruits to Europe valued at more than $40.8 million; and leveraged private sector investment where Blue Skies committed $453,383 to support 4,333 farmers in the sub-region through its farmer credit program—agronomic support to the eradication of bacterial blight spot disease—and the Blue Skies Academy aimed to foster agricultural development among the youth.

When the first reports of the contagious corona virus in Wuhan, China, appeared in the news, little did the rest of the world know that it would soon be a global pandemic, with devastating consequences. In Ghana, Victoria Boateng, a mango farmer, and long-term supplier to Blue Skies, was far from imagining that the pandemic could one day disrupt the global supply chain with trickle-down effect on her mango farm. As a long-term supplier to Blue Skies, she was used to harvesting mangoes twice a year, during the major (April to August) and minor (November to January) seasons, assured of a ready market from Blue Skies.

"We rely on Blue Skies to buy our mango and help us gain the technical skills and knowledge to be able to grow our farm. Without them we would not be here today", said Victoria.

However, when the pandemic caught up with nearly the rest of the world in March 2020 and triggered several global restrictions, it was not long before many airlines began restricting or grounding passenger flights. While some cargo freighters were still operating, they were flying to cities where Blue Skies did not have distribution hubs (which meant additional road freight had to be organised) and their rates were high due to the increased demand. With a supply chain in turmoil, Blue Skies saw its sales plummet and costs rocket. Victoria's number one buyer could not commit to buying the usual quantity of raw material from suppliers like her and many other farmers. The worst was in sight.

Victoria Boateng poses by one of her flowering mango trees. The mangoes will be ready for harvest during the minor season between November and January.

To help safeguard the business and protect the thousands of staff, farmers and their communities who depend on the company for their survival, USAID supported Blue Skies with a grant of $760,000 in May 2020. In return, Blue Skies committed to advance $474,000 to the following support programmes:

- **Credit Facility** – advanced payment/loans to help farmers with their working capital needs. This benefited both Blue Skies and its suppliers as it provided farmers with the means to grow and harvest fruits, whilst Blue Skies continued production and upheld its high-quality standards of processed fruits.
- **Farmer Assist** – the provision of agronomic training and agro-inputs to help improve productivity and fight diseases like Mango Bacterial Black Spot. This is provided to farmers for free as the benefits of good agricultural practices far outweigh the cost of the inputs.
- **Blue Skies Academy** – an inter-school competition aimed at fostering agricultural development among young people. This is seen as a long-term strategy which can help foster innovation and talent and help to develop the future supplier base for Blue Skies.

USAID's support helped Blue Skies and its suppliers to overcome the pandemic. With access to credit, Victoria kept growing her mangoes and by July 2020, she was able to hire additional staff to harvest the fruits. Despite all the turbulence, Blue Skies was once again waiting to buy the fruits. If it was not for the risk of becoming infected with COVID-19, life was normal for Victoria. Perhaps she will never know that a near-miss was avoided, and her fruits reached their usual destination, benefiting not only her, but her family, and many other families who rely on the success of her farms.

Annex VIII. Current Status of the ASSESS PASA's Proposed Technical Briefs

#	Proposed Topic	Content Description (Synopsis)	Current Status (January 2024)
1.	Lessons Learned from ASSESS for Strengthening the Capacity of Regional Institutions by USAID: The Case of CORAF	This technical brief seeks to document the support (technical assistance) USAID provided to Regional Institutions such as ECOWAS, UEMOA, and CORAF and any related outcomes. Of the three institutions, CORAF received the most support (i.e., support channeled through the ASSESS mechanism). The documentation will narrow its focus to the technical assistance provided to CORAF. The nature of support provided (i.e., embedding different experts within CORAF to provide technical assistance in various areas) and the value addition of that approach will be explored. The technical brief will also highlight some of the key outcomes of this support based on documentation received from CORAF. The write-up will be based on a review of activity documents.	Full draft exists and has had an initial edit but not yet revised, reviewed, or finalized.
2.	Lessons Learned from ASSESS for Integrating Students into Applied Research Programs for USAID	This technical brief aims to highlight the research opportunity USAID offered for KNUST to have PhD candidates assess the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the apparel and agriculture sectors. The technical brief will put a spotlight on the USAID support provided to private sector actors (i.e., Blue Skies, DTRT, and EAA), and the link created for the PhD research. It will highlight how the private sector partners (per the arrangement set out through USAID funding) were involved in the PhD research process, including participating and contributing to periodic seminars at key stages of the research. The involvement of these stakeholders, including their participation in the data collection phase (availing their institutions and staff for key informant interviews and focus group discussions) of the research, will be outlined in the technical brief. It will further touch on USAID's own involvement in the review of the PhD work and the value addition to the research. The technical brief will conclude with KNUST's plan to create a PhD Review Committee that will have the involvement of USAID staff to enrich studies conducted at the PhD level and to ensure they are tailored to addressing real developmental needs and challenges.	Full draft exists and has had an initial edit but not yet revised, reviewed, or finalized
3.	Lessons Learned from ASSESS for Virtual l Learning Platforms	This technical brief aims to share ASSESS's varied experiences and lessons from hosting virtual events for USAID. The documentation will highlight ASSESS's journey from hosting in-person events to the Virtual Meeting space. What necessitated the move to a virtual meeting space will be highlighted alongside what ASSESS needed to do as part of the process (i.e., the learning curves that had to be surmounted, continued learning and adapting, the search for suitable platform, the quest for a one-stop shop/platform with all features, resolving	Partial draft exists and has not had an initial edit.

#	Proposed Topic	Content Description (Synopsis)	Current Status (January 2024)
		the translation or simultaneous interpretation challenge for a mechanism that serves Anglophone and Francophone IPs, etc.). Most importantly, the technical brief will document the key lessons from hosting these virtual events (from the co-creation events to the recently completed Communication and MEL virtual workshops). ASSESS will also capture the impact of the Communication and MEL virtual workshops. For people looking to continue collaborations and learning within the virtual space, what should they take into consideration? What key lessons or experiences will be helpful for informing the planning of such virtual events or training workshops? These and more will be the focus of this technical brief.	
4.	Shaping USAID's Programming through Evaluations: Lessons Learned from the ASSESS Regional PASA	This will be the overarching technical brief to highlight ASSESS's contribution to shaping program design at USAID through evaluations. It will highlight the ASSESS approach to conducting evaluations and studies over the years and the outcomes thereof. The technical brief will delve into the evaluations and studies conducted and how these influenced programming and related decision making at USAID. The technical brief will put a spotlight on which evaluations led to new program designs or key decisions such as revision in program implementation approaches, major mid-course corrections, significant changes in resource allocation, etc. ASSESS will seize the opportunity to also share key lessons and best practices from conducting evaluations to feed into meaningful decision making.	Full draft exists and has had an initial edit but not yet revised, reviewed, or finalized.
5.	Lessons Learned from ASSESS for Making Localization Work in USAID's Regional Programs	The ASSESS program has modeled and implemented many of USAID's initial expectations for its localization initiative.	Basic analysis exists and was incorporated into the ASSESS final report.

Source: ASSESS team, based on PASA records. December 2023.