CASE STUDY

A Case Study on the Effectiveness in Project Design Using Third-Party Responsible Partners as Implementing Partners

Project Title:
Enhancing Jaguar Corridors and Strongholds through Improved Management and Threat Reduction

Prepared for:
Forest Department
Ministry of Sustainable Development, Climate Change & Solid Waste Management
Government of Belize

Prepared by:
Alexis D. Salazar, Consultant

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Executive Summary

This case study examines the effectiveness of using Third-Party Responsible Partners (TPRPs) as implementing partners in the project *"Enhancing Jaguar Corridors and Strongholds through Improved Management and Threat Reduction"*, executed by the Forest Department under the Ministry of Sustainable Development, Climate Change and Solid Waste Management, with support from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). The project aimed to secure jaguar corridors, improve protected area management, reduce threats such as wildlife crime, and strengthen local and institutional partnerships, while also enhancing monitoring systems for biodiversity conservation.

Given the national significance of the project and the use of a multi-partner implementation model, this evaluation focuses on the performance of the TPRP approach, particularly through the roles of Ya'axché Conservation Trust (YCT) and the Corozal Sustainable Future Initiative (CSFI). The study investigates whether this model delivered on expectations in terms of operational efficiency, institutional accountability, local engagement, and long-term conservation impact.

The evaluation employed a mixed-methods approach, including a comprehensive review of project documentation and partnership agreements, key informant interviews with Forest Department staff, UNDP representatives, and TPRP implementers, as well as focus group discussions and field-level observations. In addition, stakeholder feedback from previous consultation workshops and interim validation meetings informed the preliminary analysis.

Key findings suggest that while the TPRP model enabled significant field-level activity and allowed for decentralized engagement across distinct geographic corridors, it also presented challenges in coordination, communication, and implementation timelines. CSFI and YCT both demonstrated local knowledge, technical capacity, and organizational commitment, and were able to tailor implementation to community

needs. However, the project encountered delays due to administrative bottlenecks, financial disbursement constraints, and varying levels of clarity around roles and responsibilities, particularly in the early phases of implementation.

Despite these challenges, both TPRPs reported valuable institutional growth. CSFI expanded its capacity to address jaguar-livestock conflict through targeted training and protocol development, while YCT enhanced its work in sustainable hunting practices, wildlife monitoring, and community engagement. The inclusion of Free, Prior, and Informed Consent (FPIC) protocols, while valuable for safeguarding rights, contributed to extended implementation timelines and community misunderstandings regarding project benefits.

The TPRP model added measurable value by localizing interventions and supporting long-term continuity beyond the project lifespan. However, there were missed opportunities to harmonize reporting tools, align expectations, and capitalize on shared learning across partners.

Preliminary recommendations include:

- Defining roles and deliverables more clearly in future TPRA agreements.
- Aligning project activities with each partner's existing operational strengths and community relationships.
- Simplifying or tailoring FPIC protocols when appropriate to the project scope and community expectations.
- Creating standardized reporting templates and feedback mechanisms to improve coordination and accountability.
- Allocating more time and flexibility in project timelines to accommodate field-level realities.

This draft case study provides the foundation for further validation with stakeholders and will support the Forest Department and UNDP in refining future multi-partner project designs for enhanced biodiversity conservation outcomes in Belize.

INTRODUCTION

1. Introduction

Belize, a country recognized for its global biodiversity value, maintains over 60% of its landmass under natural forest cover, with nearly 40% designated as protected areas. Among its most iconic and ecologically significant species is the jaguar (*Panthera onca*), a wide-ranging apex predator that requires large, connected habitats to maintain viable populations. In response to ongoing threats—including habitat fragmentation, unsustainable land use, human-wildlife conflict, and illegal hunting—the Government of Belize, through the Forest Department and with support from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and funding from the Global Environment Facility (GEF), launched the project *"Enhancing Jaguar Corridors and Strongholds through Improved Management and Threat Reduction."*

The project adopts an integrated, landscape-level approach to strengthen jaguar corridors and improve the management of key conservation units across the country (see Figure 1). One of the most ecologically significant areas is the Maya Forest Corridor, which connects critical habitats between the northern and southern regions of Belize and serves as a focal point for jaguar movement and protection efforts.

Figure 1. The Maya Forest Corridor, a key jaguar habitat linking protected areas in central Belize.

A distinguishing feature of this project is its implementation structure, which leverages Third-Party Responsible Partners (TPRPs), in this case, the Ya'axché Conservation Trust (YCT) and the Corozal Sustainable Future Initiative (CSFI), to carry out key activities on the ground. This model was adopted to capitalize on the existing technical capacity, geographic presence, and community relationships of these organizations. Under the TPRP model, each partner was responsible for a discrete component of the project: YCT for Output 3, focused on sustainable hunting and wildlife monitoring in southern Belize, and CSFI for Output 2, focused on jaguar-livestock conflict mitigation and community outreach in the north.

While the TPRP model introduced opportunities for localized, responsive delivery, it also presented coordination and accountability challenges. These included delays in fund disbursement, misalignment of project expectations, inconsistent communication, and complex implementation conditions such as the need for Free, Prior, and Informed Consent (FPIC) in multiple communities.

This case study aims to evaluate the effectiveness of the TPRP implementation model within the context of this nationally significant conservation initiative. Specifically, it assesses the extent to which the TPRP approach contributed to or constrained project outcomes, with a focus on operational efficiency, resource use, stakeholder engagement, and long-term institutional impact.

By documenting the lived experiences of implementing partners, the coordination dynamics with the Forest Department and UNDP, and the lessons learned from successes and setbacks alike, this report seeks to inform future project designs in Belize and similar conservation contexts. It is not an audit or performance review but a reflective and developmental evaluation—one that provides practical insights into how third-party implementation models can be optimized for effectiveness, inclusivity, and sustainability.

METHODOLOGY

2. Methodology

This case study employed a participatory, mixed-methods approach to evaluate the effectiveness of using Third-Party Responsible Partners (TPRPs) as implementing partners in the project *"Enhancing Jaguar Corridors and Strongholds through Improved Management and Threat Reduction."* The methodology was designed to capture both the structural dimensions of project design and the lived experiences of implementers and stakeholders involved in its execution.

2.1 Evaluation Approach

The evaluation followed a developmental case study approach, which is particularly suited to complex, adaptive projects operating within dynamic ecological and institutional settings. This approach was chosen not only to assess the performance of the project but also to extract actionable lessons and support strategic reflection within the Forest Department and its implementing partners. Rather than judging success in binary terms, the case study aimed to generate a nuanced understanding of how the Third-Party Responsible Partner (TPRP) model functioned in practice and how it influenced project results.

At the heart of this evaluation is a systems-oriented perspective, recognizing that conservation outcomes are the result of interactions among multiple actors, institutional arrangements, and socio-ecological conditions. The TPRP model, by design, introduces decentralized execution and shifts many aspects of implementation—technical delivery, community engagement, and localized decision-making—to non-governmental partners. Accordingly, the evaluation sought to understand how this model shaped operational dynamics, resource allocation, coordination mechanisms, and stakeholder relationships.

A central emphasis was placed on:

Collaboration – including the quality of relationships between the Forest Department, UNDP, and TPRPs, as well as among TPRPs themselves.

Accountability mechanisms – how roles were defined, how financial and narrative reporting was conducted, and how oversight and support were provided.

Adaptive management – how flexible the implementation process was in responding to field conditions, community feedback, and institutional bottlenecks.

Sustainability of field-level interventions – whether project investments, such as training, tools, or protocols, are likely to be sustained or scaled beyond the project timeline.

The evaluation was guided by four interrelated criteria:

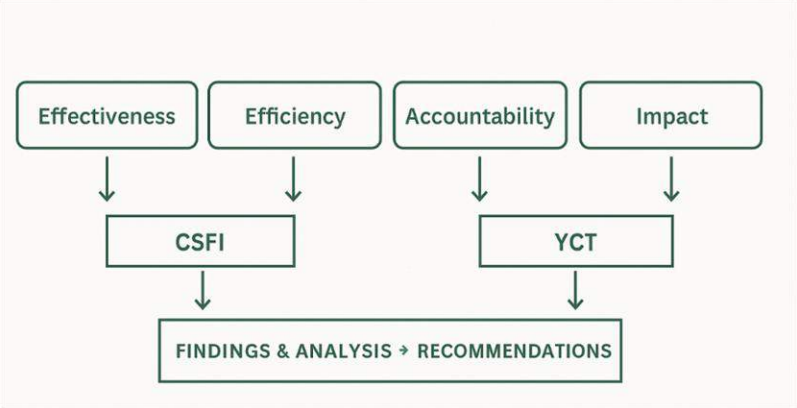


Figure 2. Evaluation Framework used to assess the TPRP model

Effectiveness

This criterion focused on the extent to which each TPRP successfully delivered the expected project outputs in alignment with their respective components—Output 2 (CSFI) and Output 3 (YCT). It considered the quality and relevance of the interventions, progress toward intended outcomes (e.g., jaguar conflict mitigation, sustainable game species management), and the degree to which implementation matched the original logic of the project design.

Efficiency

This dimension examined how resources—financial, human, and technical—were used by the TPRPs and whether activities were carried out within a reasonable timeframe and budget. It also explored procedural issues such as delays in fund disbursement, procurement processes, and the alignment of institutional calendars between government and international funding bodies.

Accountability

The evaluation explored the clarity of roles and responsibilities as outlined in the TPRAs, the transparency and regularity of reporting, and how financial controls and technical monitoring were exercised by both the Forest Department and UNDP. Special attention was given to how performance feedback was shared, and how it informed subsequent actions or adjustments.

Impact

While recognizing the relatively short project timeline, this criterion aimed to identify broader effects—both intended and unintended—of the TPRP model. These included institutional growth within YCT and CSFI, capacity building of field teams, changes in community awareness or participation, and contributions to national conservation priorities. It also considered how the project affected local ownership of conservation efforts and the likelihood of sustainability after project closure.

Through this framework, the evaluation sought to generate not only a descriptive account of what was done but also an analytical reflection on how and why certain outcomes occurred, what trade-offs were inherent in the TPRP model, and how these lessons could inform more effective project design in future biodiversity and natural resource management efforts in Belize.

2.2 Literature Review of Published and Grey Literature

The evaluation was informed by a focused review of both published academic sources and grey literature related to third-party implementation models, participatory conservation, and decentralized environmental governance. This review served to contextualize the TPRP approach not only within global best practices, but also within the unique institutional, ecological, and policy landscape of Belize.

International literature on third-party implementation consistently emphasizes the value of partnering with local or community-based organizations to enhance implementation efficiency, responsiveness, and legitimacy. These models are often favored in conservation settings where direct state intervention may be limited due to capacity, remoteness, or the need for specialized stakeholder engagement. In global South contexts, particularly in Latin America and Sub-Saharan Africa, studies have underlined the importance of strong institutional trust, clear contractual frameworks, participatory monitoring systems, and mechanisms for mutual accountability to ensure the effectiveness of third-party partnerships (Brockington & Scholfield, 2010; Büscher & Dressler, 2012). However, the literature also warns of challenges such as fragmentation, weakened oversight, role ambiguity, and delays in disbursement—factors that can undermine project coherence and sustainability if not proactively addressed (World Bank, 2018).

Within Belize, a review of grey literature—particularly project documents, inception reports, TPRA agreements, and technical notes—provided a rich foundation for evaluating the application of the TPRP

model. The project's design documents, including the Third-Party Responsible Agreements (TPRAs) for YCT and CSFI, clearly outline the intent to delegate implementation responsibilities to community-based NGOs in regions where they possess pre-established field presence, ecological expertise, and community trust. These agreements emphasize outputs linked to jaguar conflict mitigation, sustainable game species management, FPIC processes, and institutional strengthening. The expectation was not only operational delivery but also strategic alignment with national biodiversity goals and the institutional development of the partner organizations.

Source	**Type**	**Relevance to Case Study**
Brockington & Scholfield (2010); Büscher & Dressler (2012)	Peer-reviewed articles	Global lessons on TPRP models, accountability, decentralization
World Bank (2018)	Institutional report	Risks of fragmentation in donor-funded TPRP projects
UNDP Operational Guidelines	Grey literature	Procedural templates for fund disbursement, partner reporting
TPRA Agreements (YCT, CSFI)	Legal/contractual documents	Implementation structures, outputs, reporting requirements
Project AOPs & Inception Reports	Grey literature	Work plans, coordination mechanisms, bottlenecks identified
Forest Department policies	Government policy	Co-management precedents, decentralization rationale

The Inception Report and Annual Operating Plans (AOPs) underscore that the model was conceived as a response to on-the-ground realities in Belize, particularly the geographic fragmentation of key ecological corridors and the state's limited enforcement capacity in remote areas. Rather than implement directly through a centralized agency, the project leveraged localized execution via trusted NGOs to improve field responsiveness and community buy-in. This approach resonates with earlier efforts in Belize, notably the Protected Areas Conservation Trust (PACT) funding mechanisms and various co-management agreements between the Forest Department and NGOs. These earlier models offer instructive lessons: while partnerships can unlock local innovation and community participation, their success hinges on adequate oversight, role clarity, and predictable resource flows.

Further, the inception documentation and TPRA terms indicate that the TPRP model was seen as an opportunity to test institutional readiness for greater implementation autonomy and to build durable capacity in civil society conservation actors. The project aimed to shift from transactional subcontracting toward a model of collaborative stewardship, with responsibilities not only for technical delivery but also for financial accountability, stakeholder engagement, and long-term sustainability planning.

Importantly, the grey literature also revealed structural constraints, including overlapping institutional mandates, turnover among Forest Department personnel, and uneven familiarity with performance-based contracting models. These factors, though not unique to Belize, underscore the importance of adaptive management and proactive communication in multi-partner delivery models. Several documents also reflect learning loops from earlier UNDP-GEF projects in Belize, particularly in terms of strengthening financial reporting, aligning implementation timelines with field constraints (e.g., fire season), and institutionalizing gender and community safeguards.

In sum, the literature review reinforced the theoretical grounding and practical relevance of the TPRP model used in this project. It affirmed that while decentralized, partner-led implementation carries inherent risks, it also offers a pathway to increased sustainability, community legitimacy, and institutional maturity—when supported by appropriate oversight, capacity-building, and trust-building mechanisms.

2.3 Data Collection Methods

To comprehensively assess the implementation and performance of the TPRP model, the evaluation employed a combination of qualitative and documentary data collection methods. This approach ensured a triangulation of evidence, allowing for a deeper understanding of both the formal project design and the lived experiences of those involved in its execution. By capturing insights from multiple sources, official documents, implementing partners, oversight entities, and field-level personnel, the study was able to build a rich and multidimensional picture of how the project unfolded across different institutional and geographic contexts.

The evaluation began with an in-depth review of key project documents, including:

1. The project's Logical Framework.
2. Third-Party Responsible Agreements (TPRAs) with YCT and CSFI.
3. Inception Reports, Annual Operating Plans (AOPs), meeting notes, and financial tracking tools.
4. Terms of Reference for the evaluation and project oversight bodies.

These documents provided foundational information on the original project design, implementation structure, scope of work, and expectations for each TPRP.

Key Informant Interviews

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with key stakeholders representing the Forest Department (as project lead), Ya'axché Conservation Trust (YCT), Corozal Sustainable Future Initiative (CSFI), and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Belize. These interviews were designed to be conversational yet focused, allowing for both structured responses to guiding questions and the exploration of emergent themes.

The interviews provided a platform for stakeholders to reflect on their roles and experiences throughout the project. Themes explored included the clarity and alignment of roles defined in the TPRA agreements, communication protocols between the Forest Department and implementing partners, and the responsiveness of the project to on-the-ground realities. Particular attention was given to how implementation challenges—such as delays in fund disbursement, shifting scopes, and staffing transitions—were managed and whether mechanisms for adaptive management were effectively used.

Stakeholders also shared insights on institutional learning, such as how their organizations strengthened internal systems, improved technical capacity, and adapted project activities to align better with community dynamics. These interviews yielded critical perspectives on both the enabling factors and the constraints of the TPRP model, contributing directly to the findings and recommendations presented in this case study.

Focus Group Discussions

Focus group discussions were held with technical teams and field-level personnel from both YCT and CSFI. These sessions provided a collective space for implementers to share experiences, validate each other's insights, and highlight practical challenges and successes encountered during implementation.

Participants discussed the day-to-day realities of coordinating activities under the TPRP structure, particularly in remote or resource-limited settings. For instance, discussions revealed how environmental shocks—such as widespread agricultural fires in 2024—disrupted community engagement and participation in wildlife monitoring activities. Similarly, community resistance to certain protocols, such as FPIC, was surfaced and contextualized within broader expectations about benefits and project ownership.

These sessions offered depth to the understanding of how front-line staff navigated institutional expectations, operational constraints, and community sensitivities, helping to surface themes that might not have emerged through one-on-one interviews alone.

Method	Description	Tools/Sources
Document Review	Analysis of project documents, TPRAs, AOPs, reports	ProDoc, TPRA, Inception Report
Key Informant Interviews	One-on-one interviews with UNDP, FD, CSFI, YCT staff	Interview guides
Focus Group Discussions	Group interviews with field staff and technicians	Notes, recordings
Field Observations	Site visits to observe implementation of project outputs	Site logs, evaluator notes
Validation Workshop	Stakeholder meeting to confirm and refine findings	Presentation feedback

Stakeholder Consultations and Feedback

Preliminary findings were presented to project stakeholders during interim validation sessions to solicit feedback, confirm interpretations, and ensure the draft findings accurately reflected the perspectives and realities of those involved. These consultations were structured to encourage open dialogue, correct any misinterpretations, and refine the framing of recommendations.

Stakeholders were invited to comment on the strength and relevance of early conclusions, share additional perspectives, and contribute to the shaping of the final analysis. Feedback received during these sessions was documented and will be used to further strengthen the final version of the case study report. This iterative validation process reflects a commitment to participatory evaluation and ensures that the report remains grounded in the experiences of its intended audience.

2.4 Limitations

As with any evaluation conducted within the constraints of time, geography, and institutional realities, this case study encountered several limitations that should be acknowledged in interpreting the findings.

Firstly, timing and logistical constraints restricted the number and duration of field visits. While efforts were made to observe implementation sites and consult with field personnel, some key locations—particularly more remote or less accessible areas—could not be visited within the evaluation timeframe. This limited the ability to independently verify all reported outcomes or to directly observe the spatial extent and quality of project activities across the full project landscape.

Secondly, staff turnover within the Forest Department and implementing partners occasionally disrupted data continuity. Changes in project managers and technical staff led to gaps in institutional memory and delayed responses during interviews. In a few cases, first-hand knowledge of project inception decisions or rationale for certain implementation adjustments was no longer available, requiring reliance on written reports or secondhand accounts.

Thirdly, community-level input was primarily filtered through implementing partners. While both YCT and CSFI played critical roles in community engagement and shared valuable insights into local perceptions and participation, the absence of direct interviews or focus groups with community members themselves is a notable limitation. As such, the evaluation cannot fully capture the diversity of community voices or verify the extent of community satisfaction or perceived benefit. This may especially affect findings related to FPIC implementation, livelihood relevance, and long-term ownership of conservation practices.

Despite these constraints, the evaluation applied a triangulated, multi-method approach that helped mitigate the impact of individual data limitations. By cross-referencing information from project documents, stakeholder interviews, focus group discussions, and field observations, the study was able to build a coherent and evidence-based understanding of how the TPRP model functioned in practice. The findings presented herein should therefore be viewed as credible and representative of the major trends, experiences,

and outcomes associated with this implementation model, while also recognizing that some perspectives, particularly at the grassroots level, remain underrepresented.

Limitation	**Description**	**Mitigation Strategy**
Limited Site Visits	Travel and timing constraints restricted physical observations.	Used detailed reports, maps, and field staff feedback to supplement.
Staff Turnover	Changes in personnel at Forest Dept and partners affected data continuity.	Triangulated with available documentation and overlapping staff.
Limited Direct Community Input	Most insights came via partner intermediaries.	Cross-validated via interviews and field observations.
Time Constraints	Limited duration for validation and synthesis.	Shared interim findings to pre-validate emerging insights.

PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION OVERVIEW

3. Project Implementation Overview

3.1 Description of TPRP Model in This Project

The Third-Party Responsible Partner (TPRP) model utilized in this project represented a deliberate structural decision aimed at enhancing both the operational reach and the technical depth of conservation interventions across Belize's jaguar corridors. The approach was designed to shift implementation responsibilities from a centrally managed model toward a decentralized partnership framework, where specific components of the project were contracted out to community-based conservation organizations with on-the-ground presence, sectoral expertise, and long-standing ties to local communities.

This model was formalized through the signing of Third-Party Responsible Agreements (TPRAs) with two organizations: the Ya'axché Conservation Trust (YCT) and the Corozal Sustainable Future Initiative (CSFI). These agreements delineated clear roles and responsibilities, set performance expectations, and outlined funding arrangements, accountability procedures, and reporting protocols. The Forest Department retained the role of lead agency, responsible for overall coordination, alignment with national policy objectives, and direct communication with the UNDP as the project's funding and administrative partner.

Corozal Sustainable Future Initiative (CSFI) was responsible for Component 2, targeting human-jaguar conflict in the Northern Biological Corridor. CSFI's scope of work included:

- Establishing and training a rapid response team for managing jaguar-livestock conflicts.
- Developing early warning and reporting systems in communities experiencing jaguar encounters.
- Promoting positive jaguar-related narratives through community outreach and ecotourism initiatives.
- Strengthening institutional capacity to respond to wildlife emergencies through training in humane trapping and handling techniques.

Ya'axché Conservation Trust (YCT) was assigned Component 3, which focused on the sustainable management of game species within the Maya Golden Landscape in southern Belize. YCT's responsibilities included:

- Conducting community-level wildlife assessments to estimate sustainable offtake levels.
- Designing and piloting a quota-based hunting system grounded in ecological data.
- Implementing FPIC protocols in all target communities.
- Training local surveyors in wildlife monitoring methodologies, including the use of camera traps.
- Engaging farmers in the development of wildlife-friendly agroforestry farm plans.

In both cases, the TPRPs were required to submit periodic technical and financial reports, align their workplans with the overarching Annual Operating Plan (AOP) of the project, and participate in project board and technical advisory committee meetings. Funds were disbursed through the Forest Department, although in some instances, direct transfers from UNDP were arranged due to procedural delays, particularly during audit periods or system-based disbursement freezes.

The rationale for this model stemmed from several considerations:

1. Geographic Reach: CSFI and YCT operate in distinct regions that corresponded directly to the project's targeted corridors, allowing for regionally tailored implementation.
2. Technical Capacity: Both organizations brought sector-specific knowledge and community trust, making them effective vehicles for delivering complex interventions such as FPIC protocols and wildlife monitoring systems.
3. Institutional Development: By entrusting major deliverables to civil society partners, the project aimed to leave behind a stronger, more capable network of conservation actors post-implementation.
4. Operational Flexibility: The model allowed each partner to plan and execute activities with a degree of autonomy, adapting to localized challenges and opportunities more nimbly than a centralized government agency might have.

However, the decentralization of implementation also introduced challenges. These included inconsistencies in communication between partners and the Forest Department, variations in the interpretation of project scope, delays in fund disbursement, and difficulties in aligning internal timelines, financial years, and procurement systems. Additionally, the need for cross-organization synchronization, particularly when facing external shocks like wildfires or community resistance, placed strain on coordination mechanisms that were not always formalized at the outset.

Despite these challenges, the TPRP model enabled a broader and more embedded reach into target communities and ecosystems than would have been feasible through a purely government-led initiative. It also created an enabling environment for innovation, institutional learning, and long-term ownership—central themes that this case study evaluates in the sections that follow.

3.2 Roles of the Forest Department, CSFI, and YCT

The implementation of the *"Enhancing Jaguar Corridors and Strongholds through Improved Management and Threat Reduction"* project was guided by a collaborative delivery framework in which the Forest Department served as the lead coordinating agency, while two Third-Party Responsible Partners (TPRPs)—the Corozal Sustainable Future Initiative (CSFI) and the Ya'axché Conservation Trust (YCT)—were tasked with executing core components of the project in the field. This division of labor was intended to leverage the comparative advantages of each institution, combining the Forest Department's mandate and policy authority with the community-level expertise and geographic presence of the TPRPs.

Partner	**Output**	**Primary Activities**	**Geographic Focus**
CSFI	Output 2	Conflict mitigation, community outreach, camera trapping	Northern Belize (Río Bravo region)
YCT	Output 3	Sustainable hunting, wildlife monitoring, ranger training	Southern Belize (Maya Golden Landscape)

As the national lead, the Forest Department bore responsibility for overall project oversight, policy alignment, and strategic coordination. It acted as the liaison between the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), which managed the project's funding, and the implementing partners, ensuring that activities were aligned with national conservation priorities. The Department also reviewed and approved work plans, annual budgets, and periodic reports submitted by CSFI and YCT, and participated in the Project Board and Technical Advisory Committee to provide strategic input. However, despite its leadership role, the Forest Department faced challenges related to internal capacity. Limited staff

availability, shifting project management personnel, and procedural delays occasionally undermined its ability to provide consistent guidance and timely decisions. These gaps were especially evident during critical implementation junctures, such as the roll-out of the Free, Prior, and Informed Consent (FPIC) process in southern communities and during audit-related disruptions in financial disbursement mechanisms.

CSFI, the implementing partner responsible for Component 2 of the project, led efforts to mitigate jaguar-livestock conflict in the Northern Biological Corridor. Its work included establishing and training a rapid response team capable of humanely managing jaguar encounters, developing early warning systems and incident reporting protocols in communities affected by conflict, and conducting outreach campaigns to promote coexistence. A key dimension of CSFI's strategy was the promotion of jaguar-themed ecotourism as a sustainable, community-based conservation incentive. In addition to executing its assigned activities, CSFI used the project as an opportunity to strengthen internal technical capacity in wildlife handling and to align its organizational development with long-term conservation goals. While CSFI was generally successful in executing its responsibilities, it encountered practical challenges including budgetary delays, unforeseen costs, and the need to reconfigure elements of its organizational structure to better align with project demands.

YCT was responsible for Component 3, which centered on promoting sustainable wildlife management and improving community-based conservation practices in the Maya Golden Landscape. This involved conducting ecological assessments of game species and developing a quota-based hunting system, training local community members in wildlife monitoring using camera traps, and designing agroforestry-based farm plans that promoted wildlife-friendly land use. A significant aspect of YCT's role involved engaging communities through the FPIC process to ensure consent and ownership of project activities. While YCT brought significant experience and strong community relationships to the project, implementation was slowed by delays in completing the FPIC process, partly due to community expectations, miscommunications, and environmental disruptions such as large-scale wildfires. Additionally, changes in project leadership at the Forest Department created a lack of clarity at key decision-making points. Nevertheless, YCT's involvement helped expand community awareness of conservation issues, built institutional capacity in participatory monitoring, and opened new opportunities for integrating biodiversity goals into livelihood planning.

Together, the roles played by the Forest Department, CSFI, and YCT reflect the distributed yet interdependent nature of the TPRP model. Each organization brought strengths and limitations to the project, and the dynamic between them significantly shaped the pace, focus, and quality of implementation. Their experiences offer important lessons for designing future multi-partner conservation efforts that balance centralized oversight with decentralized execution.

3.3 Key Outputs from Each TPRP Based on TPRA Agreements

The Third-Party Responsible Agreements (TPRAs) signed with Ya'axché Conservation Trust (YCT) and Corozal Sustainable Future Initiative (CSFI) outlined specific outputs aligned with each organization's geographic focus and technical strengths. These deliverables were strategically designed to contribute to the overall project objectives while building institutional capacity and promoting sustainability through locally grounded interventions.

TPRP	Component	Key Outputs	Main Activities	Notable Achievements
CSFI	Component 2: Jaguar Conflict Mitigation	1. Rapid response protocol for jaguar-livestock conflict 2. Community-based training and outreach on wildlife-friendly alternatives	- Established trained jaguar response team - Developed humane trapping & relocation protocol - Created early warning systems - Conducted education campaigns- Promoted jaguar-themed ecotourism	- Improved community attitudes toward jaguars - Enhanced response capacity- Seeded long-term coexistence models
YCT	Component 3: Sustainable Game Management	1. Community-based hunting quota model 2. Game species management strategy & action plan 3. Wildlife-friendly agroforestry engagement	- Developed game offtake estimation model- Designed pilot hunting quotas- Deployed camera traps with trained local monitors- Created 16 farm maps and agroforestry plans- Delivered training in game species monitoring	- Launched participatory monitoring - Built technical capacity at community level - Promoted sustainable farming near protected areas

CSFI was assigned responsibility for delivering two main outputs under Component 2 of the project. The first involved the development and application of a rapid response protocol for jaguar-livestock conflict in the northern landscape. This entailed establishing a trained response team, creating operational guidelines for humane trapping and relocation of jaguars, and developing early warning systems in collaboration with community members. The second output focused on a training and outreach program aimed at promoting wildlife-friendly economic alternatives. CSFI engaged communities through education and public awareness campaigns that sought to change perceptions of jaguars from threats to assets, while also exploring opportunities for jaguar-themed ecotourism as a long-term incentive for conservation. Through this work, CSFI not only addressed immediate human-wildlife conflict concerns but also laid the groundwork for coexistence frameworks that can endure beyond the life of the project.

YCT, in turn, was tasked with leading Component 3, which focused on advancing the sustainable use and management of game species in southern Belize. According to the TPRA, YCT was expected to develop a community-based model for estimating sustainable offtake of game species, with a specific focus on jaguar prey. This model was to be informed by ecological assessments and used as a foundation for designing a pilot hunting quota system to be implemented in six target communities. YCT was also responsible for delivering a strategy and action plan for community-level game species management, including training activities and monitoring protocols. A core element of this work involved deploying camera traps to collect wildlife data, which also served as a capacity-building tool for local participants trained as community surveyors. In parallel, YCT engaged 16 farmers in the creation of customized farm maps and agroforestry plans, designed to promote wildlife-friendly agricultural practices in buffer zones around protected areas.

Although the scale and nature of activities varied between the two partners, both CSFI and YCT succeeded in delivering key outputs that aligned with their TPRA commitments. CSFI strengthened its institutional

capacity to respond to jaguar-related incidents and generated community engagement in conservation discourse through practical and symbolic interventions. YCT, despite delays caused by FPIC implementation challenges and environmental disruptions, was able to successfully pilot participatory monitoring systems and initiate community-level land-use planning aligned with biodiversity objectives.

These outputs, while framed as discrete deliverables, were also instrumental in shaping institutional culture and reinforcing the relevance of grassroots participation in biodiversity conservation. The ability of both organizations to adapt their technical delivery to the realities of implementation—while honoring their contractual commitments—demonstrates the strategic potential of the TPRP model when matched with capable, mission-aligned partners.

3.4 Coordination Challenges and Successes

The TPRP model, by design, introduced a more distributed implementation structure intended to enhance efficiency, leverage local expertise, and improve community reach. However, while this decentralization brought tangible benefits, it also revealed several coordination-related challenges that influenced the rhythm and coherence of implementation.

One of the primary coordination challenges stemmed from role ambiguity, particularly in the early phases of the project. Although the TPRAs outlined responsibilities, there were gaps in shared understanding around boundaries of decision-making authority, the extent of autonomy granted to TPRPs, and the Forest Department's supervisory role. This was compounded by changes in project personnel across all institutions, which disrupted continuity in communication and institutional memory. For instance, delays in finalizing work plans and budgets were partly attributable to differing interpretations of approval processes, financial ceilings, and the sequencing of activities across components.

Another significant challenge involved timing and disbursement of funds, which often created downstream effects on implementation. Both CSFI and YCT experienced delays in receiving project funds, whether due to administrative bottlenecks at the Forest Department or systemic constraints within the UNDP's disbursement procedures. These delays sometimes forced partners to self-finance interim project costs or adjust implementation schedules, placing strain on institutional resources and undermining momentum on the ground. The situation was particularly difficult during audit freezes, which limited financial transfers and complicated partner planning cycles.

Despite these difficulties, the project achieved notable coordination successes, especially in relation to technical cooperation and shared learning between partners. The Technical Advisory Committee provided a valuable forum for periodic reflection, troubleshooting, and knowledge exchange. It allowed for adaptive decision-making, particularly during unexpected disruptions such as the 2024 wildfire events in southern Belize or community pushback on FPIC timelines. Regular joint meetings with the Forest Department and UNDP—though sometimes irregular—offered opportunities for clarifying expectations, revisiting priorities, and jointly resolving procedural impasses.

An additional success emerged through the adaptive management capacities demonstrated by both TPRPs. Rather than adhering rigidly to pre-set activities, both CSFI and YCT recalibrated their approaches in response to field-level realities. For instance, when certain communities expressed reluctance to participate in FPIC, YCT expanded its engagement timelines and invested in additional trust-building. CSFI, meanwhile, responded to stakeholder feedback by enhancing community sensitization efforts before initiating jaguar response deployments. These actions, while not formally required, helped to sustain local legitimacy and increase buy-in for project objectives.

Finally, the project benefited from complementary institutional strengths that, when aligned effectively, enhanced the overall impact of the intervention. The Forest Department's policy mandate and national perspective, CSFI's technical skill in wildlife response and ecotourism, and YCT's credibility in participatory conservation collectively contributed to a more context-responsive model than could have been achieved by any one actor alone.

Taken together, the coordination experience under this project illustrates both the opportunities and complexities inherent in multi-partner conservation initiatives. While challenges around clarity, communication, and administration were real and at times disruptive, the willingness of partners to collaborate, adapt, and learn ensured that coordination mechanisms—formal and informal—were ultimately effective in keeping the project on course.

Category	**Challenges Identified**	**Successful Responses**
Role Clarity	- Initial ambiguity over decision-making authority - Unclear supervisory roles of FD vs. partner autonomy- Staff turnover disrupted communication and institutional memory	- Joint planning sessions helped align expectations - TAC meetings allowed clarification of responsibilities over time
Fund Disbursement	- Delayed fund transfers from UNDP/FD - Audit-related freezes disrupted cash flow- Partners sometimes had to self-finance	- Some flexibility allowed partners to adjust timelines - Regular meetings helped escalate urgent disbursement issues
Communication & Oversight	- Irregular communication cycles - Delays in finalizing budgets/workplans- Inconsistent understanding of protocols	- TAC and joint meetings facilitated peer learning - Informal communications sustained collaboration during lags
Field-Level Adaptation	- Community resistance to FPIC timelines (YCT) - Sensitivities around jaguar interventions (CSFI)	- YCT extended timelines & added trust-building activities - CSFI enhanced community sensitization before deployment
Complementary Strengths	Not a challenge, but a critical enabling factor	- FD provided national policy oversight - CSFI offered field and wildlife expertise - YCT brought credibility in participatory approaches

FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

4. Findings and Analysis

This section presents a synthesis of the evaluation findings organized around four core criteria: effectiveness, efficiency, accountability, and impact. Drawing from document reviews, interviews, field observations, and stakeholder consultations, the analysis highlights both the strengths and limitations of the Third-Party Responsible Partner (TPRP) model as implemented through CSFI and YCT. The table below summarizes key achievements and challenges across each criterion, offering a balanced perspective on how the model functioned in practice and its implications for future conservation programming in Belize

Evaluation Criteria	Strengths	Challenges
Effectiveness	TPRPs adapted and delivered key outputs; innovative technical practices; community engagement in conservation.	Delays in disbursement; staff turnover; reduced scalability due to procedural constraints.
Efficiency	Local presence allowed for quick mobilization; partners used existing networks to bypass logistical hurdles.	Irregular fund flows; lack of shared planning tools; inefficiencies in scheduling and reporting.
Accountability	TPRAs provided clear deliverables; partners complied with reporting; internal audits and Board oversight were strong.	Shifting guidance and inconsistent support from FD; unclear procedures for budget adjustments; no formal grievance mechanisms.
Impact	Improved wildlife monitoring and response; strengthened organizational capacity; increased community participation.	Short project timeline limited impact tracking; community engagement depth constrained by time and resources.

4.1 Effectiveness

The evaluation found that the TPRP model contributed meaningfully to the achievement of project outputs, particularly in terms of field-level activity implementation, stakeholder engagement, and technical innovation. Both CSFI and YCT successfully executed the majority of their assigned responsibilities under the TPRA framework, demonstrating high levels of institutional commitment and the capacity to adapt implementation strategies in response to real-time challenges.

In the case of CSFI, the effectiveness of Component 2 was evident in the operationalization of the Rapid Response Team for jaguar-livestock conflict, the development of incident protocols, and the delivery of outreach programs in conflict-prone communities. Field reports and stakeholder interviews confirmed that CSFI's interventions helped reduce retaliatory killings of jaguars and contributed to growing community awareness around coexistence strategies. Furthermore, CSFI's integration of jaguar conservation messaging into broader ecotourism planning showcased an innovative approach that extended project value beyond traditional conservation outputs.

Similarly, YCT achieved substantial progress under Component 3. Despite initial delays linked to the Free, Prior, and Informed Consent (FPIC) process and environmental disruptions (e.g., wildfires), YCT implemented wildlife monitoring using camera traps, trained community members in data collection, and developed sustainable hunting plans tailored to ecological assessments. These activities not only advanced the project's immediate biodiversity goals but also fostered community engagement in long-term conservation practices. The inclusion of agroforestry planning further demonstrated YCT's commitment to integrated landscape management.

However, the evaluation also identified constraints to full effectiveness. Several activities were delayed due to late disbursement of funds and changing priorities within the Forest Department, including shifts in oversight personnel and procedural bottlenecks. In some cases, technical tools and methodologies had to be adjusted or scaled back due to limited time or insufficient training capacity at the community level. These challenges, while managed pragmatically by the TPRPs, reduced the overall speed and scalability of certain outputs.

Nonetheless, the overall assessment is that the TPRP model enabled a level of reach, adaptability, and relevance that would have been difficult to achieve through centralized implementation alone. The alignment between project goals and partner strengths—combined with iterative, on-the-ground problem-solving—ensured that most of the intended results were realized within the constraints of time, resources, and context.

4.2 Efficiency

The evaluation found that the TPRP model yielded mixed results in terms of efficiency. On one hand, the delegation of responsibilities to CSFI and YCT allowed for rapid mobilization in known landscapes, with each organization leveraging its pre-existing infrastructure, local networks, and community trust to implement activities without the need for extensive onboarding or institutional setup. In both northern and southern Belize, the use of embedded local actors enabled the project to bypass some of the logistical challenges often associated with state-led interventions in remote or ecologically sensitive areas.

CSFI demonstrated a relatively streamlined approach to implementation, especially in its deployment of the Rapid Response Team, development of jaguar conflict protocols, and coordination with local stakeholders. The organization's small operational footprint and close relationship with community leaders allowed for timely responses to jaguar-related incidents and the efficient delivery of outreach programs. Similarly, YCT's long-standing engagement in the Maya Golden Landscape contributed to the efficient delivery of camera trap training, data collection activities, and the design of agroforestry plans with local farmers. Their access to technical staff and established community rapport facilitated activity roll-out, particularly after initial FPIC-related delays were addressed.

However, the evaluation identified several efficiency bottlenecks that constrained the timely and cost-effective execution of project activities. A key issue was the irregular flow of funds from the Forest Department to the TPRPs, often caused by administrative hurdles, internal delays in financial clearance, or late submission of required documentation. In both partner cases, disbursement delays led to periods of underutilized staff, missed activity windows (e.g., dry season fire breaks, planting seasons), and in some instances, forced the NGOs to pre-finance activities while awaiting reimbursement. This unpredictability undermined cost-efficiency by necessitating duplicate planning cycles, re-engagement of community participants, or short-notice logistical arrangements.

Another challenge was the limited harmonization of work plans across the project's components. Although the TPRAs included detailed deliverables and timelines, the absence of a unified implementation calendar or centralized coordination mechanism led to inefficiencies in scheduling, procurement, and reporting. This was particularly evident during the FPIC rollout, where YCT's timelines were not adequately synchronized with Forest Department reviews, contributing to procedural standstills. In both cases, the lack of a shared digital platform or standardized monitoring tool made real-time collaboration and adjustment difficult, increasing the administrative burden on all parties.

From a human resource standpoint, both TPRPs demonstrated good internal efficiency, with staff multitasking across project components and leveraging in-house expertise. However, several staff noted the additional strain caused by short-term contracts and the need to simultaneously manage other donor-funded

projects. While this is common in the NGO sector, it did affect institutional capacity to maintain full-time focus on the UNDP-funded activities at certain stages.

Despite these inefficiencies, the evaluation concluded that the decentralized delivery model still produced a reasonable return on investment in terms of technical outputs, institutional strengthening, and community engagement. The embeddedness of CSFI and YCT within their respective regions offset many of the logistical and trust-building costs that would have been incurred under direct implementation. With improved administrative coordination and more predictable financial flows, the efficiency of the TPRP model in Belize could be further enhanced in future iterations.

4.3 Accountability

Accountability under the TPRP model was assessed in terms of clarity of roles, adherence to reporting requirements, financial transparency, and responsiveness to oversight mechanisms. While the model fostered localized implementation and adaptive delivery, it also exposed several areas where accountability frameworks required stronger institutionalization and consistent enforcement.

At a structural level, the Third-Party Responsible Agreements (TPRAs) signed with CSFI and YCT established a clear set of deliverables, output indicators, and reporting obligations. These documents defined the scope of work for each partner, laid out payment schedules tied to deliverables, and articulated the oversight role of the Forest Department as the project lead. Both TPRPs complied with the formal submission of technical and financial reports, participated in coordination meetings, and engaged in external review processes. The presence of detailed appendices within the TPRA documents—including budget templates, performance benchmarks, and work breakdown structures—provided a strong contractual foundation for accountability.

However, in practice, the effectiveness of these accountability mechanisms was uneven. Both CSFI and YCT expressed uncertainty at various stages regarding expectations for progress reporting, procurement procedures, and budget reallocation approvals. These ambiguities often stemmed from shifting guidance from the Forest Department, exacerbated by staff turnover and the absence of a dedicated project manager for extended periods. For instance, delays in the review and sign-off of YCT's FPIC process created a chain reaction that affected the timing of several downstream activities—yet it was not always clear how responsibility for these delays was to be assigned or mitigated.

From a financial oversight perspective, the project adhered to UNDP's procurement and audit requirements, but inconsistencies in disbursement documentation and lack of real-time budget tracking created difficulties for both the implementing partners and the Forest Department. Several delays in fund transfers were linked to missing or incomplete financial documentation, while partners noted that the procedures for rectifying such issues were not well-communicated or standardized. This reduced overall confidence in the budget cycle and occasionally resulted in resource gaps at critical implementation moments.

On the positive side, both CSFI and YCT demonstrated high levels of institutional transparency and internal accountability. Interviews with technical and administrative staff indicated that procurement and reporting procedures were followed internally, and that partner organizations maintained audit trails and internal approval processes consistent with their broader operational policies. In both cases, Board oversight was active, and internal project monitoring mechanisms helped ensure that field activities remained aligned with agreed outcomes.

Additionally, the accountability dimension of the project was strengthened through stakeholder validation workshops and feedback loops embedded into project review processes. These included participatory discussions on implementation progress, lessons learned, and adaptive management decisions. However,

the limited direct involvement of community beneficiaries in formal reporting structures remains a gap—community feedback was primarily filtered through the TPRPs, and no formal grievance or redress mechanism was instituted at the beneficiary level.

In summary, the accountability mechanisms functioned reasonably well but would benefit from greater clarity, consistency, and the institutionalization of feedback systems. Ensuring continuous guidance, standardizing financial reporting tools, and introducing community feedback loops could significantly improve the transparency and robustness of future TPRP-led initiatives.

4.4 Impact

The evaluation found that the TPRP model generated a range of tangible and intangible impacts across biodiversity conservation, institutional capacity, and community engagement. While not all impacts are easily quantifiable—particularly given the relatively short project duration—evidence gathered from field visits, interviews, and documentation points to significant contributions made by both YCT and CSFI in advancing project goals and generating broader conservation value.

At the biodiversity conservation level, the project contributed directly to improved monitoring and mitigation of threats to jaguar populations and their prey. CSFI's development and implementation of a jaguar-livestock conflict response protocol allowed for more humane, informed, and rapid responses to incidents, thereby reducing retaliatory killings and fostering a new narrative of coexistence. The presence of a trained response team and community sensitization activities helped position jaguars not only as apex predators but also as symbols of national pride and ecotourism potential. In the south, YCT's deployment of camera traps, community-based wildlife monitoring, and integration of ecological data into sustainable hunting models marked a step forward in participatory biodiversity management. These efforts helped to fill critical data gaps while also enhancing local understanding of wildlife ecology.

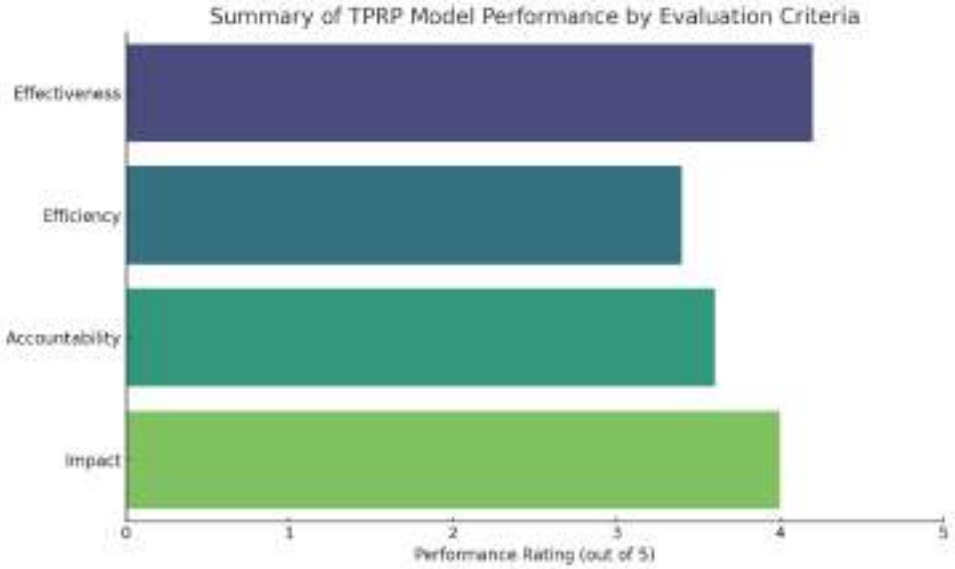
The model also had a significant institutional impact on the implementing partners. Both CSFI and YCT deepened their technical capacities in project management, financial administration, and data-driven conservation planning. For example, YCT successfully designed and piloted a community hunting quota system based on ecological assessments—an institutional first—and developed agroforestry plans tailored to wildlife-friendly farming practices. These initiatives not only contributed to the project's deliverables but also strengthened YCT's organizational repertoire for future landscape management work. Similarly, CSFI expanded its outreach capacity and built a foundation for integrating jaguar conservation into ecotourism programming, thereby broadening its institutional mission and visibility.

In terms of local empowerment and community engagement, the project provided entry points for more inclusive conservation. YCT's work with 16 farmers on agroforestry planning and farm mapping allowed for more sustainable land-use practices while respecting community knowledge systems. The participatory nature of the hunting quota system further reinforced the idea that conservation can be locally led and contextually adapted. Likewise, CSFI's interaction with livestock owners and community leaders on jaguar management issues helped foster a shift in perceptions, moving from fear or antagonism toward a more coexistence-based model of interaction with wildlife. However, both partners noted that time and resource constraints limited the depth and breadth of community involvement, particularly with respect to sustained follow-up, gender representation, and youth engagement.

Although the project's time frame did not allow for long-term impact assessment, the interventions implemented through the TPRPs laid the groundwork for durable change. Institutional practices, technical systems, and local attitudes showed measurable shifts, suggesting that the project's influence will continue to resonate beyond its formal close. Furthermore, the model itself—of leveraging credible, place-based

organizations to drive conservation—gained validation through this experience and may serve as a prototype for future initiatives seeking to localize environmental governance in Belize and beyond.

In summary, the impact of the TPRP model extended beyond discrete outputs. It catalyzed organizational learning, deepened community trust, and contributed to the development of scalable conservation strategies rooted in local realities. With appropriate follow-up and investment, the seeds planted by this model could yield significant long-term dividends for both people and ecosystems.



LESSONS LEARNED AND RECOMMENDATIONS





5. Lessons Learned and Recommendations

This section synthesizes the practical insights gained throughout the implementation of the TPRP model under the jaguar conservation project. Drawing from interviews, field observations, and project documentation, it highlights key lessons that emerged regarding local engagement, institutional coordination, and adaptive delivery. The accompanying recommendations aim to strengthen future applications of the TPRP model, ensuring more effective, inclusive, and resilient conservation outcomes across Belize and similar contexts.

Lesson Learned	**Corresponding Recommendation**
Localized Implementation is Valuable	Institutionalize the TPRP model with stronger oversight and flexibility.
Institutional Readiness and Flexibility is Critical	Provide onboarding and continuous support to all partners.
Accountability Needs Both Structure and Relationship	Pilot community feedback mechanisms and formalize escalation protocols.
Community Engagement is Time-Intensive but Essential	Extend project timelines to allow for deeper, iterative community work.
Coordination Mechanisms Require Strengthening	Integrate a common monitoring and coordination system across all implementing partners.
Learning Should Be Documented and Shared	Document institutional experiences through briefs, case studies, and technical notes to support adaptive learning and replication in future conservation projects.

5.1 Lessons Learned

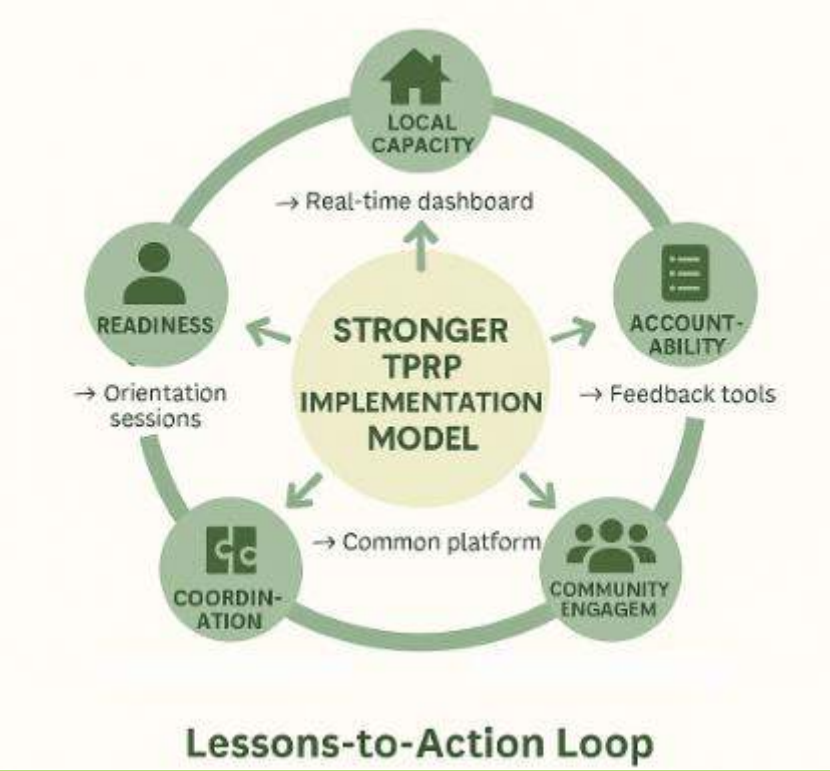
1. The Value of Localized Implementation -The use of TPRPs with deep community roots—CSFI in the north and YCT in the south—proved instrumental in reaching remote areas, engaging local stakeholders, and implementing technically complex interventions. Their familiarity with the landscape and social dynamics allowed for smoother navigation of challenges such as community skepticism, logistical barriers, and culturally sensitive processes like FPIC. The project demonstrated that investing in existing local capacities, rather than duplicating them, can improve responsiveness and legitimacy.

2. Importance of Institutional Readiness and Flexibility - While both TPRPs showed strong commitment and capacity, their ability to deliver was periodically affected by delays in disbursement, evolving expectations, and unclear guidance. This highlighted the importance of ensuring that implementing partners are adequately supported—not just contractually but institutionally—through timely communication, flexibility in adjusting work plans, and predictable funding mechanisms.

3. Accountability Requires Both Structure and Relationship - The TPRAs included well-structured deliverables and reporting templates, but practical accountability was often governed more by interpersonal trust and informal communication than by documentation alone. Strong relationships between the Forest Department and the TPRPs allowed for adaptive management, but this also left room for inconsistency. Formalizing key processes—without eroding collaborative spirit—could reduce risk and improve clarity.

4. Community Engagement is Time-Intensive but Essential - Both CSFI and YCT faced the challenge of balancing technical delivery with genuine community participation. While important groundwork was laid (e.g., hunting quotas, agroforestry planning, jaguar response teams), the short project timeline limited sustained engagement and feedback loops. Community-led conservation requires long-term presence, relationship-building, and iterative dialogue.

5. Coordination Mechanisms Need Strengthening - Although each partner delivered on its own mandate, cross-component alignment (e.g., between FPIC timelines and fieldwork schedules) was sometimes weak. The lack of a shared monitoring platform or centralized implementation calendar created inefficiencies and delayed joint action. More robust coordination mechanisms are needed when multiple partners are executing interconnected components.



Lessons-to-Action Loop: How field insights can shape more effective future third-party implementation.

5.2 Recommendations

1. Institutionalize TPRP Model with Stronger Oversight and Flexibility - Future projects using the TPRP model should invest in both structured agreements and enabling environments. This includes pre-validating reporting templates, setting up a real-time implementation dashboard, and creating escalation protocols for bottlenecks in disbursement, procurement, or technical review.

2. Provide Onboarding and Continuous Support to All Partners - Orientation sessions at the start of the project—and periodic reorientation during implementation—can help align expectations, clarify deliverables, and reduce misunderstandings. This should include financial procedures, procurement guidelines, and adaptive management processes. Special attention should be given when there is turnover at any institutional level.

3. Extend Project Timelines for Deep Community Work - Where community processes like FPIC, co-management planning, or behavioral change are required, project timelines should be realistic and flexible. Investing in the "social infrastructure" of conservation is as critical as funding field activities.

4. Integrate a Common Monitoring and Coordination System - A shared digital platform or project coordination tool should be implemented across all TPRPs and oversight agencies. This can improve alignment, transparency, and collaborative problem-solving. Even basic systems—like shared Gantt charts or activity trackers—can significantly reduce duplication and miscommunication.

5. Pilot Community Feedback Mechanisms - Future projects should integrate feedback tools such as participatory scorecards, community validation forums, or grievance redress mechanisms. This would not only enhance social accountability but also deepen learning for TPRPs and funders alike.

6. Document and Share Institutional Learning - Given the relative novelty of the TPRP model in Belize, documentation of good practices, innovations, and setbacks should be prioritized. This can include technical briefs, case studies, or policy notes that inform future projects, especially those exploring co-management or delegated delivery systems.

6. Conclusion

This case study set out to evaluate the effectiveness of using Third-Party Responsible Partners (TPRPs) as implementing partners in the delivery of conservation initiatives under the Forest Department–UNDP project framework. Through a structured review of project documents, stakeholder interviews, field observations, and a targeted literature review, the study found that the TPRP model enabled the project to achieve key technical, institutional, and community-level objectives—albeit with notable implementation challenges.

The collaboration with Ya'axché Conservation Trust (YCT) and the Corozal Sustainable Future Initiative (CSFI) demonstrated the value of leveraging local knowledge, trust networks, and operational presence in complex and ecologically sensitive landscapes. The two TPRPs successfully implemented critical components related to wildlife monitoring, jaguar conflict mitigation, sustainable use planning, and community engagement, thereby reinforcing the potential of this decentralized approach to conservation.
However, the evaluation also revealed that the success of such models depends not only on the capacity of the implementing partners, but also on the clarity, consistency, and responsiveness of the systems designed to support them. Issues related to funding disbursement, role ambiguity, and limited coordination mechanisms impacted efficiency and created occasional confusion among stakeholders. While these challenges did not fundamentally undermine the project's outcomes, they underscore the need for greater institutional alignment, shared systems, and long-term engagement strategies in future applications of the TPRP model.

Importantly, this evaluation highlights that the TPRP approach is not simply a logistical arrangement—it is a governance choice that carries implications for accountability, equity, and long-term sustainability. As Belize continues to pursue conservation and development objectives through collaborative partnerships, this model offers valuable insights into how government institutions and civil society organizations can co-create impact.

The findings and recommendations offered in this report are intended to inform ongoing institutional learning within the Forest Department, UNDP, and other stakeholders. With appropriate adjustments and investment in system-wide support structures, the TPRP model holds promise as a replicable and scalable strategy for biodiversity governance in Belize and beyond.

Key drivers of successful third-party conservation implementation: a balance between local expertise and system-level support.