SECTOR ADJACENCY ASSESSMENT TOOL

Tool Objective: Help you start to identify connections between your project and external drivers and outcomes from other sectors that you may not have previously considered, and to provide ideas for how to act on those connections.

Mac users see footnote*

Practitioners and researchers in the health, development, and environment sectors increasingly recognize that the challenges they are tackling don't exist in silos. For teams that are new to exploring connections outside their primary areas of expertise, a key first step in moving from broad awareness to tangible actions is to identify a focal set of connections between a team's primary interest (e.g., forest protection) and important, adjacent issues in other sectors (e.g., agriculture, food and nutrition security, gender equity). Creating a short list of such connections can help focus a team's planning process towards linkages that may be most important to learn more about.

Why and how might a project team use a tool like this?

Consider this example project (this is a hypothetical case for illustrative purposes):

Context: Artisanal and small-scale gold mining (ASGM) is the largest anthropogenic source of mercury worldwide, accounting for 37% of emissions. Miners use mercury to isolate gold from surrounding sediments, and then burn mercury off into the atmosphere. Human exposure to mercury causes a range of neurodegenerative and other negative health effects.[1,2,3]

Project Goal: Reduce negative human health effects related to mercury exposure from ASGM in Southern Peru.

Project Approach: Provide access to alternative protein sources for affected communities (to reduce dependence on contaminated local food sources). Provide access to safety equipment for miners so they are not exposed during the mining process.

Unanticipated Consequences: By ignoring the effects of mining on deforestation and the connections between healthy, intact forests and the local tourism industry, the project might fail to fully address the problem at hand. If alternative protein and miner protective gear are

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provided, but nothing is done to address deforestation resulting from mining expansion, the mercury problem may intensify. If major sources of local income are mining and ecotourism, and ecotourism is harmed by deforestation in ecotourism areas, a potential consequence might be that people leave ecotourism to join the mining industry. Additional miners would ultimately introduce mercury into the water supply and atmosphere at a faster rate. If the environmental consequences of mining were considered at the beginning of the project, a different project approach might have been selected.

The Sector Adjacency Assessment Tool provided here is intended to help individuals or teams begin identifying connections to other areas of expertise that might be relevant to investigate in more depth. These connections can form the start of a structure for other planning tools such as situation analyses, logic models, and results chains, or help identify domains of expertise (and associated experts) to engage during a project.

This tool is inspired by, and expands upon, FHI360's adjacency map for integrated development. We intend for individuals or teams to use this tool as a brainstorming exercise to expand their thinking beyond high-level sectoral connections like "health," "development," or "environment" to identify adjacent drivers and outcomes with more specificity, and to spark thinking about unintended consequences, unexpected connections, or alternative intervention pathways.

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When to use this tool:

This exercise is particularly oriented towards the initial stages of a planning process though can be used at any stage to:

- Develop an initial understanding of or reconsider the system surrounding your topic of interest

- Evaluate the potential impact of intervention options

- Identify which outside field(s) of expertise and/or stakeholders to engage in your work

- Inform the development of more in-depth planning tools or diagrams (for example: situation analysis, systems map, context diagram, conceptual model, results chain, logic model, etc.)

- Illuminate new dimensions connected to your work to consider as you move forward

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Time required:

Walking through this tool individually or with a small team should take approximately 1-3 hours. If the exercise includes broader discussion in a workshop or other larger group setting, it may take up to 5 hours.

Tool structure:

This tool has four sections that walk through a series of exercises designed to help you start thinking about cross-sector connections

Section A: **Getting Started**
Select a project/context and specify the relevant stakeholders

Section B: **Exploring Drivers and Outcomes**
Consider important issues from different sectors (using this corresponding worksheet) and think about which are relevant to your project. Rank them using the provided rubric.

Section C: **Prioritizing and Acting on Connections**
Prioritize the relevant cross-sector issues that you ranked using the rubric and think about why your team might not have acted on those connections previously. Also, consider the gender and equity implications of your project and its connection to aspects of other sectors

Section D: **Next Steps**
Think about which cross-sector connections are most important to pursue moving forward, and consider ways to act on those connections

A. Getting started

Section objective: Select a project/context and specify the relevant stakeholders.

Section instructions: Answer the three questions below.

1. Select a project you are working on or an issue you are curious to explore. What is the specific problem are you trying to solve within this work? (e.g. sustainable fish population harvest in Indonesia, poverty and incarceration rates in Memphis, women's rights in Northern India). If you already have an intervention in mind or underway, also write this below.

2. Who are the primary communities or types of people who are most directly affected by this problem? Who are the primary communities or types of people who most directly affect or are directly involved with this problem? (e.g., fishermen in Indonesia, low-income residents of Memphis, pregnant women in Northern India)

3. What, if any, are additional social or environmental problem(s) you trying to solve within this work? As above, who are the target audiences, beneficiaries, or focal communities?

B. Exploring drivers & outcomes

Section objective: Consider important issues from different sectors and think about which are relevant to your project. Rank them using the provided rubric.

Background:
You will see eight tables in this [tool's attachment](#) for the following sector areas: (1) environment; (2) health; (3) nutrition and nutrition security; (4) agriculture and food security; (5) water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH); (6) energy; (7) education; and (8) economic development and livelihoods. Note, gender and equity are not included as separate sectoral areas, but rather as crosscutting issues that should be considered in all projects—further questions on these subjects are included at the end of Section C.

Each sector table in the attachment represents a sectoral area and contains both 'drivers' and 'outcomes'* for you to consider in relation to your work. You may consider either or both depending on your stage of planning and goals for this exercise. We encourage you to push yourself to be explicit about and challenge your current assumptions, and take a curious mindset to consider how topics outside of your usual areas of expertise or comfort zone may connect to your topic of interest. These lists are not intended to be exhaustive or inclusive of every driver and outcome for a particular sector; rather, they illustrate common issues and outcomes important for that sector. However, if you feel that are important drivers or outcomes missing we provide blank space at the bottom of each sector table for you to add items to the tables.

Note: the division between drivers and outcomes is not always distinct. In this document, you will see "drivers" and "outcomes" separated in an attempt to organize like concepts; however, whether something is a driver or an outcome can be dependent on the context of the system and perspective of the analyst. For example, a "driver" listed below could be the focus of your project, and therefore be considered an outcome in your context. Similarly, an "outcome" listed below may serve as a driver in certain contexts. And some can be both, in the case of feedback loops! While it's good to keep this context in mind as you work through the document, don't get stuck on this distinction and keep in mind the main goal at hand: to use this tool to identify ways in which your project/issue is connected to knowledge areas that you haven't explored yet.

Section instructions

Step 1: | Go through each table in the attachment, briefly consider each item listed, and circle those for which you answer 'yes' or 'maybe' to the questions below:

- For each item listed, ask yourself, 'might this have a direct or indirect influence on the problem I am trying to solve?' (e.g., I am working on education access, does the item 'unsafe water, sanitation, and hygiene' influence this issue? If yes or maybe, circle it.)

- For each item listed, ask yourself, 'might this be directly or indirectly influenced by the problem I am trying to solve?' (e.g., I am working on education access, might my interventions influence the item 'human-wildlife conflict'? If yes or maybe, circle it.)

As you fill out the tables, be sure to consider the stakeholders you identified in Section A. Think about the issue from their perspectives; might this lead you to circle anything additional?

Shortcut – while there is value in considering each item in the attached tables, if you are pressed for time limit yourself to circling no more than 15 items (at least for a first pass through).

Step 2: For everything you've circled, determine a relevance score using the rubric below:

1 – highly relevant or direct connection, and we are working on it already

2 – possibly relevant and connected, but we are not working on it yet

C. Prioritizing & acting on connections

Section objective: Prioritize the relevant cross-sector issues that you ranked using the rubric and think about why your team might not have acted on those connections previously. Also, consider the gender and equity dimensions of your project and their connection to aspects of other sectors.

Section instructions: Fill in the four tables according to the prompts below, and answer the follow-up questions about gender and equity dimensions.

Relevance score 1: highly relevant or direct connection, and we are already working on it

These are connections for which you have a high degree of certainty about their relevance to your work and you have already begun to address them. List the three most significant items from the attached tables that you gave a '1' relevance score, as well as how you understand them to be related to your work. Then, reflect on any barriers (internal or external) that are preventing you from fully acting on this connection. You can select drivers, outcomes, or a mix of both to fill in the first column:

Relevance Score 1 Connections	Relationship	Barrier(s) to progress
1.		
2.		
3.		

Relevance score 2: possibly relevant and connected, but we are not working on it yet

These are connections for which you are curious about their relevance and connection to your work, but are not yet addressing. List the five most significant items from the attached tables that you gave a '2' relevance score, as well as how you understand them to be related to your work. Then, reflect on any barriers (internal or external) that have prevented you from addressing this connection. You can select drivers, outcomes, or a mix of both to fill in the first column:

	Relevance Score 2 Connections	Relationship	Barrier(s) to progress
1.			
2.			
3.			
4.			
5.			

Were there any relevance score '2' items listed in the table above that you have important questions about? Select up to three of your #2 rated items from the table above and write them below, listing a priority question related to each connection.

Some examples of questions include: "How many people consume contaminated fish per year in this region?", "Does evidence show that access to green space improves mental health outcomes in cities?", "Is access to education an issue in the region I'm working in?"

	Relevance Score 2	Priority question
1.		
2.		
3.		

Assessing gender & equity as cross-cutting considerations

a. **How are genders affected differently in your work's context?**
i.) Do men and women have different roles in this community or system? Might men and women have different perceptions related to this system?
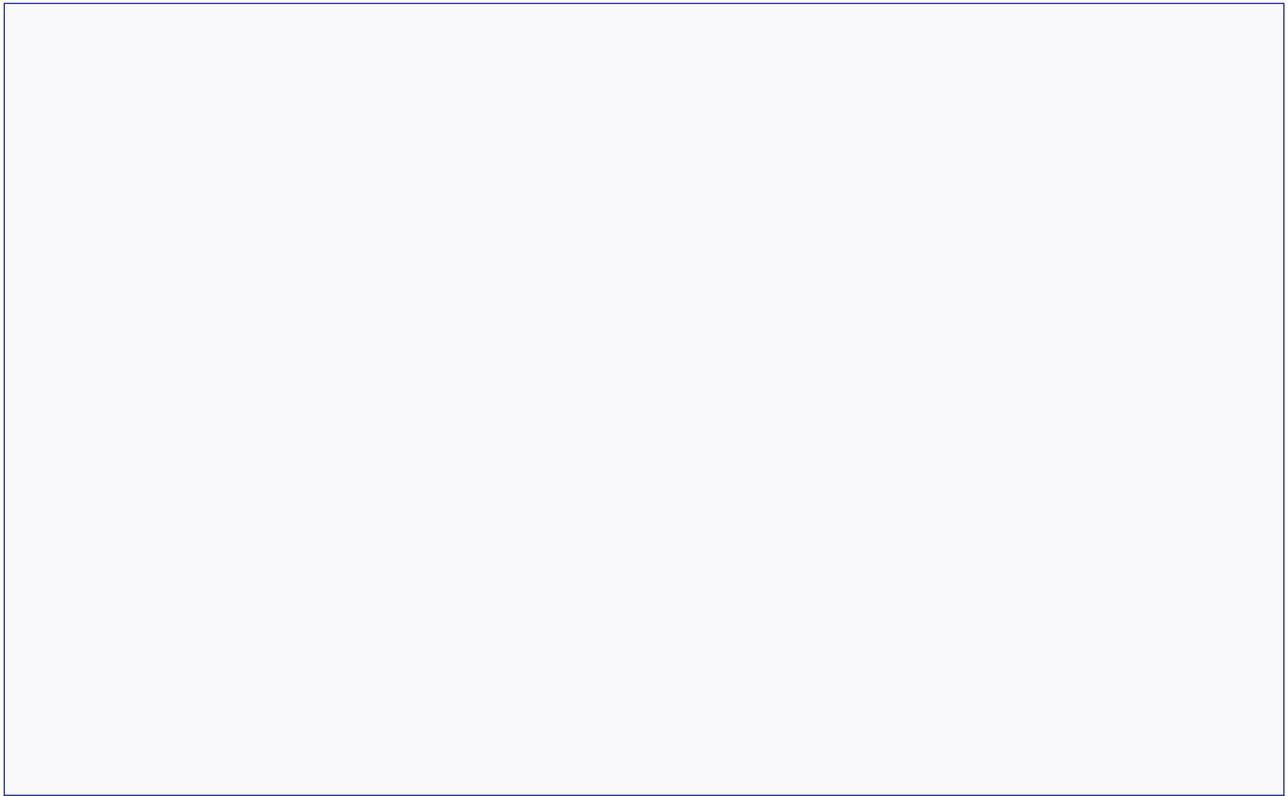
a. ii.) Consider the gender dynamics with respect to your priority connections identified in Section C (Prioritizing & Acting on Connections). Ask yourself how gender discrimination, gender empowerment, gender pay differences, and gender-specific roles/tasks might be present.
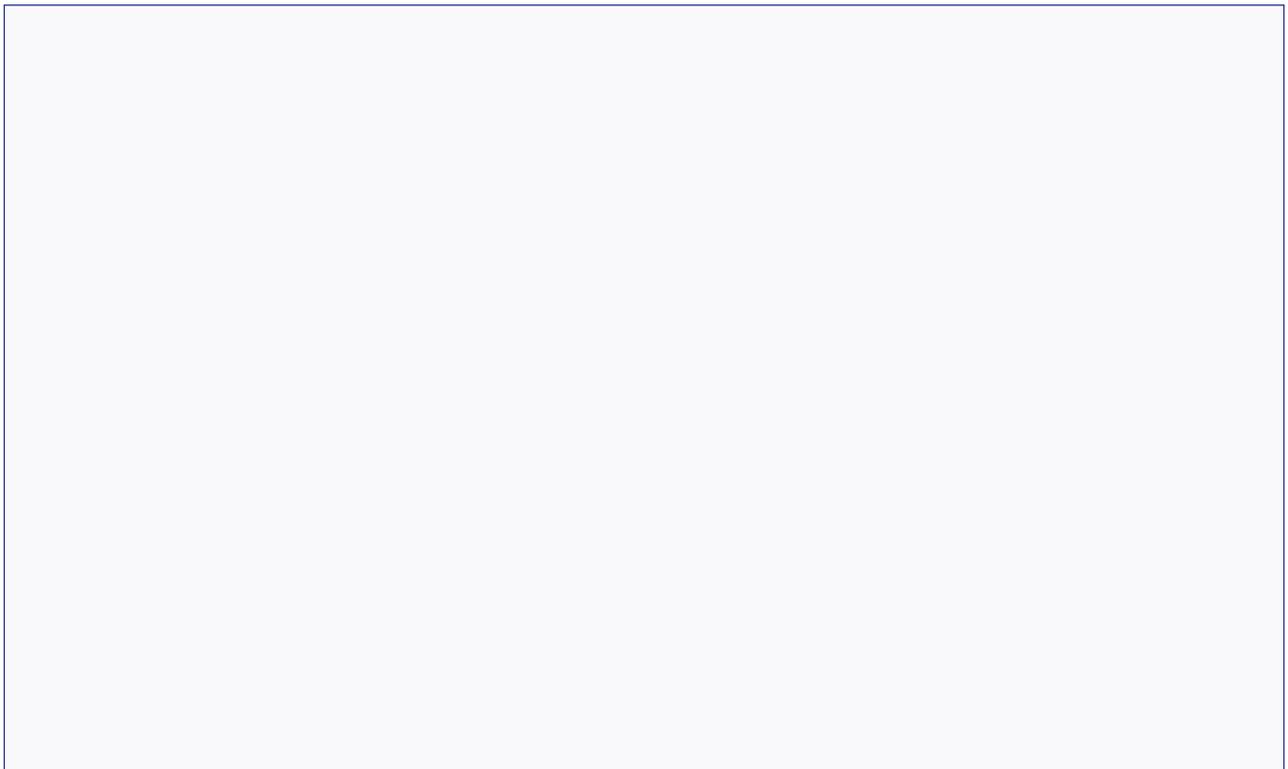
a.   iii.) Consider whether gender-disaggregated data is available for your topic of interest
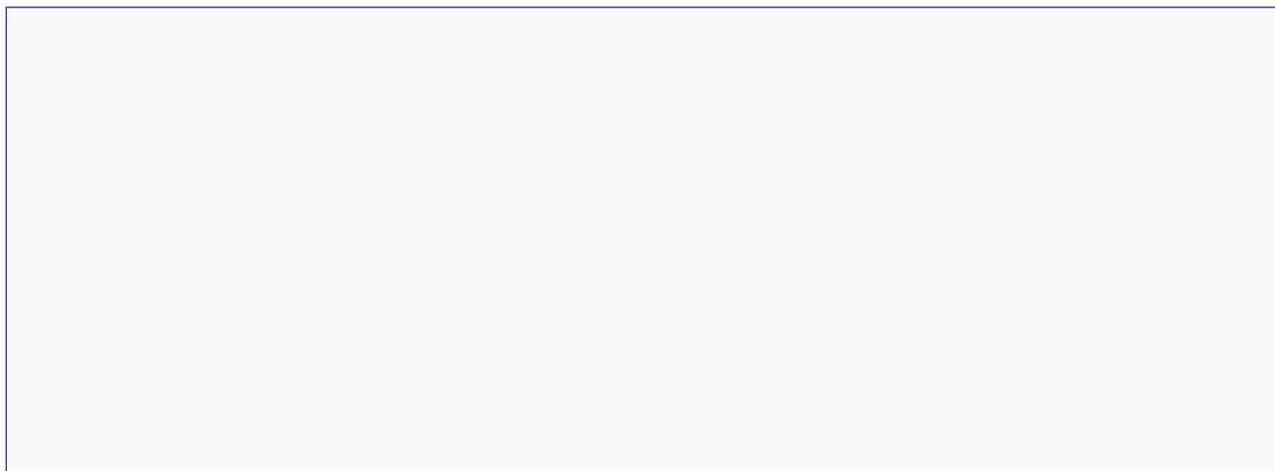
b.   Consider your beneficiaries or target audience(s). Are some groups of people affected or involved differently than others? Consider factors such as age, geography (rural vs urban), socioeconomic status, education level, race / ethnicity, cultural identity, religion, sexual orientation, and physical or mental disabilities
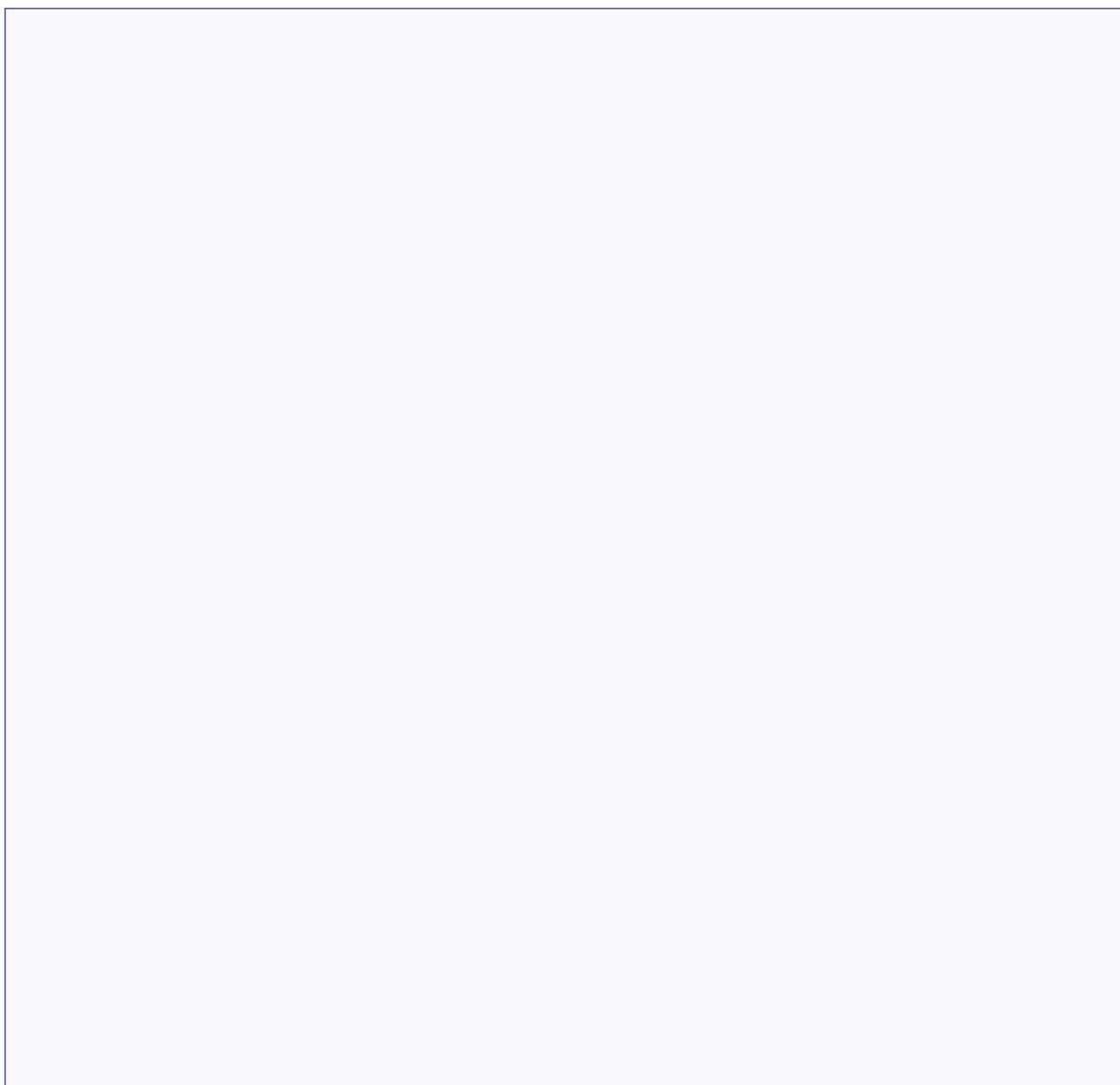
D. Next steps

Section objective: Think about which cross-sector connections are most important to pursue moving forward, and consider ways to act on those connections.

Section instructions: Fill in the table below according to the prompt, and then consider some of the follow-up suggestions for how to move forward with the connections you feel are most worth exploring.

Step 1:
From Section C (Prioritizing & Acting on Connections), you may have identified up to eight relevant connections ('Relevance Scores' 1 or 2) and listed their possible relationships to your work. To further prioritize this list, pick up to three of these items outside of your primary field that you see as most worth exploring further at this time. The motivation could be because of team interest, the interests of key stakeholders such as funders or government officials, potential for impact, strength of the relationship, or other factors.

For each, revisit the barrier or question articulated above, and identify a first step (even a tiny one!) you could take in navigating that barrier or answering that question, and a person, organization, or resource that could help you take that step.

	Connection of Interest	Small Step	Helpful person, organization or resource
	Example: The connection between infectious (zoonotic) disease outbreaks and an agricultural certification program	Using a conceptual diagram, map out expected changes to the landscape resulting from an agricultural certification program	Ask a zoonotic disease expert at a nearby university whether those changes mapped in the conceptual diagram might influence disease
1.			
2.			
3.			

Step 2: Use those three connections, your small step, and your helpful resources to do a bit more digging. Answer questions like, "is this connection really an issue that should be addressed in your project?" Is anyone else working on this connected issue already?" And if so, "are there connections between my work and their work that should be more formalized?" Below, we list a few ideas for how to move forward with this type of information.

Recommendation 1. Research priority issues in the geography you are working in related to each connection you listed.

Research Ideas:

- Do a simple Google search for the priority issues for your connection of interest in the relevant geography. Look for results from government agencies, multilateral organizations (e.g., WHO, FAO, UNDP), NGOs specializing in that topic, and/or credible news sources.

- Identify local government agencies and funders that invest within your region and look for reports, statements, or articles outlining their priorities.

- Phone a friend: Do you know someone who works on one of your topics of interest, or who would provide a different perspective on your geographic region? Did you list any 'helpful people' in the table above? Email them directly asking to review your initial research, or set up a brief call to ask relevant questions.

- If more detailed understanding of local needs is required, conduct a community needs assessment to better map community priorities. There are useful online guidance tools for conducting these types of assessments, such as the Community Tool Box.

Recommendation 2. Build a conceptual diagram. Starting from an existing conceptual diagram of your system, or building a new one from scratch, try to incorporate the priority connections of interest that you identified at the beginning of section D to really start thinking about how they might fit into the system where you are working. Use this to develop further questions and to guide future research. See the Bridge Practitioner's Guide or the Analyzing Possible Interventions or Hypotheses document for more details on conceptual models and how to build them.

Recommendation 3. Do any of the gender or equity issues that you described in Section C require further examination? Are there potential cross-sector connections to these issues that merit investigation? If it is helpful, use a results chain or situation analysis diagram to think about these connections. See the Bridge Practitioner's Guide or the Analyzing Possible Interventions or Hypotheses document for more details on conceptual models and how to build them.

Recommendation 4. Did you circle any of the crosscutting factors in the sector tables? If yes, take some time now to consider how those factors might be affecting the outcomes you care about or other prioritized connections in your system.