



# What is the impact of Community-led Development?

A collaborative research update, December 2020



Community-led Development (CLD) is a multi-sectoral, human-centered strategy for collaboration to achieve locally created and owned visions and goals. A development approach, it focuses on systemic change to foster stable, resilient, prosperous, inclusive, and self-reliant communities. The Movement for Community-led Development (the Movement), including a global chapter and 12 national chapters, comprises 70+ international non-governmental organizations and hundreds of local civil society groups, universities, government partners and other stakeholders. In addition to other goals, The Movement's members are committed to producing an evidence base about the practice and impact of CLD.

## Purpose.

Through a process of collaborative research, we seek to understand current CLD practices and the complex relationship between CLD and various development outcomes. This expansive effort encompasses approximately 400+ programs spanning 65 countries, with reports submitted by almost 60 organizations.

## The study seeks to answer:

1. How, why, and under what circumstances does community-led development lead to improved development outcomes?
2. What is the impact of CLD on development outcomes including self-reliance, resilience, gender equity, sustainability, and citizen's engagement?
3. Is the present lack of evidence on the impact of CLD due to gaps related to theory of change, implementation, measurement, or a combination of all three?
4. How do we adapt current evaluation frameworks capture the multi-dimensional impact of CLD?

# Research Structure.



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## **SCOPING SUB-GROUP**

What is CLD?

- 11 Characteristics of CLD
- CLD Assessment Tool
- Landscape of CLD programming



## **IMPACT SUB-GROUP**

What does CLD do?

- Impact of CLD
- Indicators to measure impact



## **EVALUATION SUB-GROUP**

How do we capture CLD impact?

- Quality Appraisal Tool for CLD Evaluations
- Realist Review
- Adapting evaluation methods



## **ADVISORY GROUP**

Practitioner experts

- Scott Guggenheim
- Nazneen Kanji
- Jo Howard

Academic experts

- Kent Glenzer
- Gill Westhorp

# The Study.

This multi-phase research is a collaborative learning-by-doing study. Over 35 Program and Monitoring, Evaluation, Research and Learning professionals from 23 organizations are working with the study lead (on a voluntary basis) to create tools to understand the current practice of CLD through three subgroups: Scoping, Impact, and Evaluation.

A global advisory council of academic, practitioner and methodology experts is guiding the research and ensuring its rigor.

As part of Phase 2 of this emergent research the Collaborative Research Team has begun a realist review to unpack “how” and “why” CLD works. This will enable us to understand how, why and under what circumstances do two key elements of CLD programming - community leadership and facilitation - lead to improved development outcomes, particularly resilience and equity. This phase of the research has been made possible due to a grant from The Implementer Led Design, Evidence, Analysis and Learning (IDEAL) Activity, supported by USAID.

# Sub-groups.

## Scoping Sub-group

The Scoping Sub-group has identified 11 characteristics of CLD based on a literature review coupled with consultation and an iterative process of discussion and debate. These characteristics have been used to create a scanning rubric, which was developed into the [CLD Assessment Tool](#). This tool enables organizations to understand where their programs are in their journey of CLD, and to improve and better report on their CLD work. It can be used by donors to ensure that the programs they fund are community-led. At a systemic level, the tool is the first attempt to create standards for CLD programming. The CLD Assessment Tool was released in November 2020 with a supplementary guidance document. Based on a systemic study of 176 programs across 65 countries, the Scoping Group has also produced the first ever State of CLD programming report. The report is expected to be launched in January 2021. You can read more about the emerging findings from the work of the Scoping Group [here](#).

## Impact Sub-group

Based on the theories of change of different programs and a survey of Movement partners, the Impact Sub-group has tabulated the intended and unintended impacts of CLD through a sustainability-time lens. We are currently working on a visual representation of this impact to illustrate the non-linear, non-monotonic nature of CLD outcomes, their interdependence as well as their constant interaction with context.

## Evaluation Sub-group

The Evaluation Sub-group ensures the rigor of the study methodology. After a survey of various available tools and instruments, it has simplified and adapted a USAID tool on the quality of program evaluations in the education sector. This Quality Appraisal Tool, comprises of two kinds of questions- one kind to deal with the general quality of evaluation (qualitative, quantitative or mixed methods) and the other to look specifically at the characteristics of evaluation for a CLD program.

# About the Collaborative Research.

The collaborative research is a multi-year phased initiative that will drive a better understanding of the implementation and impact of CLD at the household, population and systems level, in various contexts. It will also lead to a peer-reviewed co-creation of evaluation frameworks that capture the contributory impact of CLD. In the first phase of this research, we plotted the current practice of CLD through a review of the 176 programs that were self-reported as CLD. This process generated a broad understanding of the nature of CLD programming and its impact and provided rich insights for program design through a series of tools and guidelines. These tools are available on the MCLD website in multiple languages to enable organizations to assess their programming.

In Phase 2, the collaborative research will move from the “what works” to the “how it works” question, unpacking causal mechanisms to create an understanding of how context influences the nature and impact of CLD programming using a realist review. At the same time, we will develop participatory tools that are congruent with the complexity of CLD and will enable us to capture its impact on outcomes like citizen’s engagement and resilience.

## SECTION C: Presence and level of KEY CLD characteristics in the program

I. PARTICIPATION, INCLUSION, AND VOICE					
	Insufficient Information	1 -doesn't try	2 -tries	3 -progressed	4-succeeds
I.1 The CLD program ensures the participation of excluded groups.	No/insufficient information to make a judgement.	Potential factors of exclusion (gender, ethnicity, age, economic status) are not analyzed.	Implementers have identified potential factors of exclusion and include the views of these community members.	Implementers strengthen the collective voice in the community of those potentially excluded and build community solidarity. Note: have voice and are heard but not decision-makers	Those who risk exclusion are central actors in decision making in the program. Note: have voice, are heard, and are decision makers
I.2 Community members decide focus of the CLD program (assessment phase)	No/insufficient information to make a judgement.	Community members had no involvement in the assessment process	Community members actively participated in the assessment process and had involvement in <b>one</b> of the following: (1) designing the process (2) collecting data; (3) analyzing the data (4) formulating the conclusions	Community members actively participated in the process and had involvement in <b>two or three</b> of the following: (1) designing the process (2) collecting data; (3) analyzing the data (4) formulating the conclusions	Community members had involvement in <b>all</b> of the following: (1) designing the process (2) collecting data; (3) analyzing the data (4) formulating the conclusions
I.3 Community members play an active role in CLD program design	No/insufficient information to make a judgement.	Community members had no involvement in the design process	The basis of program design stems from select community members (e.g. leaders or representatives but no participation of wider community members).	The basis of program design stems from wide community participatory processes but without consideration of power/gender dynamics, distribution of resources within a community, different poverty-levels, etc.	The basis of program design stems from wide community participatory processes with consideration of power/gender dynamics, distribution of resources within a community, different poverty-levels, etc. These considerations are used to create a vision and action plans.
I.4 Community members play an active role in the CLD program implementation (including adaptation)	No/insufficient information to make a judgement.	Community members had no involvement in the implementation process	Select community members (e.g. leaders or representatives) are kept informed of program performance and decisions regarding implementation or adaption.	Community members and local leaders are informed of program performance and can influence decision-making around program activities, and adaptation.	Community members (including those at risk of exclusion) and local leaders drive decision-making on on-going program activities, review of program performance and any needs for adaptation.

Excerpt from Scanning Tool

## Join.

To join the collaborative research effort or for further information on the study, the tools that have been developed and the next phase of our research, write to [gunjan.veda@thp.org](mailto:gunjan.veda@thp.org)



## About the Movement.

In 2015, a group of global non-profit organizations, led by The Hunger Project, came together to create the Movement for Community Led Development. For the last five years, this group has worked tirelessly to ensure that communities take charge of their own development. In addition to its global work, the Movement has launched national chapters in 12 countries where it actively works with governments to support devolution of power. For further information, visit [mclد.org](http://mclد.org)