

## October 6: Local Means Local: Community Leadership and Facilitation in CLD Q&A

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**1 Did you look at whether elders were explicitly involved or not? Women and girls are often “excluded” but in cultures where elders play important roles their involvement is of importance as well.**

Documents reviewed identified many groups that interventions targeted for social inclusion: women, youth, internally displaced people, ethnic minorities (low caste, tribal or indigenous populations), people with disabilities, refugees, and people living with HIV/AIDs). The most adequate information was on women and youth. We found no evidence of the elderly as a targeted population for social inclusion.

That said, traditional leadership can represent a society’s elderly population - and the term “elders” itself is often used to mean traditional leaders and power holders. In this case, we did see evidence that traditional leaders played an important role in either stimulating or hindering collective leadership. Evidence showed that traditional leaders supported community decision-making through their consistent guidance, served as an accountability mechanism for collective action, and their involvement was seen as legitimizing collective action in some programs. However, when traditional leaders were not genuinely supportive of programs, corruption, elite capture, and the reluctance of community members to participate could result. There was clear evidence of the need to engage and gain the support of traditional leadership to ensure successful community mobilization and collective action. The documents examined, however, did not capture the composition of this leadership in terms of age. (See Section 4.4.2, [InCLuDE Report 2021](#), p.60).

**2. How did you differentiate between programmes that built social cohesion and/or social capital, versus those that drew on existing social cohesion and/or capital? And how did you differentiate between social cohesion and social capital?**

For the purpose of this review, we saw social capital as the relational linkages between people which enable access to other resources or support (further disaggregated into bonding capital--links within groups; bridging capital--links between groups; and linking capital--links with external actors, institutions and organizations), whereas social cohesion points to perceptions and manifestations of solidarity, unity, and sense of community. There is a connection between social capital and social cohesion. For social cohesion to exist, there have to be strong, enduring relationships (social capital) between people.

There was not a clear differentiation between programs drawing on existing social cohesion and/or capital and those that sought to build it. Often programs did both. Our understanding of whether social capital/cohesion was existing or being built was based on the evidence present in program reports. The following excerpt, for example, points toward both existing and increasing levels of social cohesion:

*In Malawi, [the programme] has successfully built on and expanded traditional levels of cooperation among villages.” ([InCLuDE Report 2021](#), p. 44)*

The following excerpt evidences an increase of bridging capital, as relationships and collaboration are built between groups:

There are also tangible changes in terms of how people see each other. That means those who used to see members of other CFUGs [Community Forest User Groups] as competitors or adversaries have now begun to engage collaboratively, for example, through NRMFs [Natural Resource Management Forums].” ([InCLuDE Report 2021](#) p. 83)

### **3. What were your findings in relation to research respondents’ capacity to understand and be able to provide responses aligned with the investigation questions?**

This research project was a type of literature review (Rapid Realist Review) in which we examined program evaluations and other documentation for 56 CLD Programs. Our analysis was based on the evidence we found in the documents reviewed--primary data collection was not undertaken for this project. We, therefore, did not work directly with research respondents. We did however do a quality assessment of the documents we reviewed, looking closely at their methodologies to consider the validity and credibility of their datasets. Following our quality assessment, we trust that the respondents, the reports’ authors, evaluators, and/ or research teams worked with, understood the questions they were asked, and could respond adequately.

### **4. Did you consider what the effect of increased women's confidence was on men?**

Our review pointed to both positive and cynical responses from men with regard to gender-focused programming. There was widespread evidence that programs intentionally worked with men and boys to raise awareness around gender equity. Reported benefits of this approach included greater food, work, and decision-making equity; and positive economic outcomes for women leading to improved gender relations within the home.

However, we also found evidence of male cynicism, with men expressing feelings of exclusion and resentment against women-focused programming. Our findings also showed that while women might experience greater equity and feel more confident in their skills and capacity, such change did not necessarily translate into better household relationships between husbands and wives (*for more on this discussion, please see Section 6, [InCLuDE Report 2021](#), p. 90*).

### **5. What about the time frame of a program? Some NGOs use a 10-15 year community engagement that builds deep community-driven development. Can we move beyond the donor-driven 3-5 year project models?**

Our review found that program duration matters. Programs that operated over a shorter time-frame were less likely to contribute to lasting and sustainable change, as attitudinal shifts towards self-reliance were unlikely to be achieved quickly. Of the programs included in this review, most indeed operated between 3-5 years. Multiple of these indicated the need for longer timeframes and some indicated the program finished before projects and/or goals could be completed. Only 4 programs in the review lasted for more than 10 years. However, it is necessary to balance program duration with increasing community ownership and plans for sustainability. At least one of the longer programs included in the review raised questions as to the sustainability of community groups and the availability of funds to carry out community-led projects. Thus, longer program time-frames will require true handover to local communities and capacity strengthening to access other sources of external funding.

Our review also points at the role context plays toward successful interventions. Context can thus, to an extent, “predict” the duration of programming that may be required. The review found that factors such

as existing levels of social capital, social cohesion, literacy rates, norms around participation, government support (amongst others) will impact program success. During the design stage of interventions, it is therefore crucial that stakeholders draw from thorough contextual analyses to understand what enabling and/or limiting factors are present. Ultimately, the time required by interventions to reach greater equity, resilience, and food security, will be influenced by the presence or absence of such enabling factors. Before starting an intervention, all stakeholders must be fully aware of “what they are up against” and use such information to think through how much time may be required. Where it is not possible to influence the time available (for example because of fixed duration grants), it may be necessary to amend expectations.

Context matters - The more evidence we can collect to convey how much context informs program successes, the sooner we might be able to move beyond one-shape-fits-all intervention timeframes. (See Section 3.5, [InCLuDE Report 2021](#) p. 42).

**6. Is it possible that RFPs themselves could undermine CLD in communities that are still in their infancy with regards to capacities for CLD? Is there a place for support/accompaniment for the CLD process before donors offer potential funding for already determined program focus areas? In other words, how much do RFPs themselves overly influence community priorities instead of their coming primarily from the community?**

Our review did not include RFPs nor did it examine the impact of RFPs’ specific development agendas on community-led practices. That said, there was evidence from a number of included programs that community members participated in a needs identification process within specified sectors or goals pre-set by the implementation agency, while in some other programs, the implementation agency both identified community needs and set program goals. Presumably, these pre-defined sectors and goals of the implementation agencies would reflect funder priorities in RFPs. As such, true CLD programs, in which communities engage in collective visioning, needs assessment and goal setting would require flexible funding not tied to a specific sector or pre-set goal and/or community participation in the grants process. (See Recommendations 2-4, [InCLuDE Report 2021](#) p. 14.)

**7. Did the research team look at the effectiveness of mobilizing local resources rather than relying on external resources? Is there a risk that the remuneration of facilitators and the funding of formalized CLD structures could create an unsustainable dependence on external donors?**

Our research did not directly compare one program approach to another. However, the mobilization of local resources was discussed in a number of the documents we reviewed. Some programs required “in-kind” contributions from the community in terms of resources and/or labor. This was a feature of programs with a strong agency influence. Other programs--those featuring a community self-identification of needs and priorities--were characterized by a strong common cause, which led community groups to mobilize resources and support from various sources. This included governments, other INGOs, local CBOs, and community members. These resources and supports contributed to successful collective action (see [InCLuDE Report 2021](#) p. 71, 77).

Our report did find evidence around compensation, particularly as far as local community-level facilitators are concerned. In this case, inadequate compensation led to absenteeism and lower levels of motivation to facilitate activities, and if payment stopped post-program, the likelihood of facilitators continuing with the work decreased significantly (see [InCLuDe Report 2021](#) Section 4.2.3, p. 56). Likewise, there was little evidence that formalized structures could become self-perpetuating without

tangible resources and support over an adequate time period; however, there was evidence that groups sought funding from a range of sources (see [InCLuDe Report 2021](#) Section 7.5, p. 114).

These findings suggest that capacity strengthening aimed at assisting community groups and structures to access other (especially local/national) sources of funding, and assisting with the formation of linkages to government and other institutions, can help provide the necessary resources and support for ongoing CLD work.

**8. Many evaluations of CDD programs have found that they lead to incremental changes on many parameters but not necessarily on any transformative outcomes on a few select parameters! Any thoughts and reflections would be appreciated!**

Whether the focus is incremental change over many parameters or transformative change in a few is a matter of program design and program theory. While the review did not address this specifically, it seems likely that communities with low levels of capacity and access to resources may need a period of incremental development over many parameters before any transformative changes could be expected.

Our review found that duration as well as context matters. If contextual factors are not considered during program design, allowing for adequate planning, appropriate program design and timeframes, and sufficient funding, then programs might run the risk of not being able to do what they originally set out to do. CLD programs should therefore adjust their programming and interventions to be responsive to local contexts, in particular building on enabling factors, and seeking appropriate ways of overcoming challenging factors.

Quality monitoring and evaluation and subsequent reflections on not only what worked, but why it worked, for who, and in what contexts, should continue to inform programs' future interventions.

**9. It would seem that working with and involving men would also be necessary to change the cultural mindset which oppresses women and vulnerable groups. What do you think? How could this be done most effectively?**

See Question 4, above.

Many of the documents we reviewed reported on the value of including men in gender-specific programming, with one program describing the goal of such programming as 'developing male change agents.' Evidence from the reports suggests that engaging men in women empowerment efforts do bear fruit because they become aware of the economic advantages of including women in capacity development programs. That said, changing mindsets takes time, and strategies for this, as with other aspects of CLD, need to be tailored to the local context. See Section 6.2.3.1, [InCLuDe Report 2021](#), p.93.

**10. How long should a strengthening program be implemented in the communities with accompaniment and technical assistance and achieve impact, empowerment and sustainability through their own leadership?**

This review did not examine the ideal length of time for a CLD intervention. We do not expect that there is one 'right' answer for this. It depends on the context, in particular, which factors are working in favor of, and which are challenging, interventions geared toward strengthening their community leadership.

Robust contextual analysis, including an understanding of communities' existing strengths, would be necessary to answer this question.

**11. When you say "targeted geography", how targeted do you mean? That is a bit open to interpretation**

We found evidence that geography impacted programs' success, with those communities furthest from the program's center receiving the least from the program, participating least, and having the least awareness of program activities. Likewise, facilitators in several programs were unable to spend enough time with all villages/locations due to the large geographic spread of these locations. It is thus good for programs to consider distance, access to and cost of transport, etc., and how these factors might impact broad participation, including that of marginalized groups. See Sections 3.6.4 and 4.2.2, [InCLuDe Report 2021](#) p.49, 55.

**12. How and when do you implement best-practice training/actions from outside, which local community members are not aware of?**

We found strong evidence that community groups required adequate capacity strengthening for successful CLD, including training on technical skills. This capacity strengthening may often require training from external sources or links to other organizations that can provide support. There was very little information in the documents on specifically how, when and by whom the training was done. Thus, we do not have evidence from the review to ascertain the best method for this.

**13. When you talk about community leaders in your research, who are you really referring to? Are these leaders found in all groups (youth, adults, girls etc.)?**

In this research, we defined community leadership as: In the framework of Community-Led Development, Community Leadership can refer to either a type of leadership by an individual from a given community, or to a process by which a community exercises collective leadership at a grass-roots level.

In the case of an individual, a community leader is a person from a specific community (usually geographically-defined) who uses their knowledge of and influence in the community to mobilize people and resources to meet a common goal—by building on strong relationships and social capital to generate community collaboration, creating alliances and connections with external actors, acting as a mouthpiece and intermediary for the community, and being a catalyst for change. Leaders may act as participants in multi-stakeholder decision-making processes, usually on the basis of consultation with other community members. Leaders may or may not hold formal leadership positions in communities.

In the collective sense, community leadership refers to a broader process whereby members of a community come together to solve a problem or achieve a goal through collaboration. In this case, leadership is distributed and shared across the community. It involves similar activities as above, and is marked by dialogue; collective processes to make decisions about priorities, plans, and activities; and the harnessing of various skills, roles, talents, and assets to contribute to

community gain and spark positive change. Different people may act as leaders at different times or in different aspects of the process.

See [InCLuDe Report 2021](#) p.52

In the documents itself, there was little clarity on what was meant by community leadership. Different reports also used the term community leaders to refer to different groups of people, including but not limited to traditional leaders, elders, elected community representatives or volunteers, people in a position to influence. The composition of the leaders - which groups they referred to- was seldom specified.

**14. In the slides for the enabling and limiting factors around formalized structures and advocacy, the limiting factors like low literacy levels, turnover are sometimes indicative of the most vulnerable groups. Will we be “selecting out” or end up selecting already more capable groups (ie with settings low levels of literacy more among females)?**

If implementing agencies are selecting groups and group members that are already the most highly skilled, this could indeed be the case. However, our review found that establishing representative community groups involved democratic processes including women, youth and traditional leaders. Likewise, the review found the necessity of capacity strengthening to assist groups in developing new skills, knowledge, and linkages. Therefore, an inclusive and representative strategy in the formation of groups must be accompanied by the support and capacity strengthening necessary to ensure the participation of the most vulnerable members. See [InCLuDe Report 2021](#) Section 7.2.1., p. 102.

**15. Can you share some examples of formalized structures?**

A range of structures, of varying degrees of formality, were involved in CLD activities, including committees, community-based organizations and local community groups. A common example was a Village Development Committee/Council (there were multiple names for a similar type group), while other groups were more limited and specific in nature, such as Forest User Groups or Community Care Groups. See Section 7.

**16. Can you speak to the barriers to formalization that community groups face, ie if a VSLA wants to formalize to get access to formal credit products, become a sacco, etc?**

Some challenges faced by groups included knowledge gaps in informal and formal governance, low levels of education, and lack of clarity about roles and responsibilities. Development of leadership capacity to avoid consolidation of power by existing community leaders, and strategies to engage traditional leaders were also crucial. However, the review did not find any evidence to speak to external barriers specific to the formalization process. See [InCLuDe Report 2021](#), sections 7.2.1 and 7.2.2. p.102, 103)

**17. How do you balance community-driven structures and the barriers of volunteerism (and lack of funding)?**

The review did not specifically examine this question, but we doubt that there is ‘one right answer’ to this. The balance will need to be negotiated for particular projects and communities. When resources are limited, expectations of inputs by community members (including their time) and expectations of outcomes to be achieved should be realistic.

**18. Pourquoi le DPC, qu'est ce que cette approche apporte de plus que les autres approches de développement ? What does CLD do better than other development approaches?**

This review did not compare CLD approaches with others.

However, other reviews have looked at this question. See Wong, Susan, and Scott Guggenheim. "[Community-driven development: myths and realities.](#)" *World Bank Policy Research Working Paper* 8435 (2018).

From MCLD's perspective, "Community-led development is a development approach in which local community members work together to identify goals that are important to them, develop and implement plans to achieve those goals, and create collaborative relationships internally and with external actors—all while building on community strengths and local leadership." (See Appendix 1 on Definitions, [InCLuDE report](#)). Following this definition, CLD places the needs, goals, and visions of local people first - with such needs, goals, and visions, not determined by external powers, but rather by the people themselves. CLD is based on the principle that local people know best - they understand their contexts best, have local knowledge, and expertise, and therefore should be key decision-makers on what community development should look like in their specific contexts.

MCLD believes that when local people are in charge of their development trajectory, they not only take ownership over their local development activities, but they also are more likely to act collectively toward achieving additional future goals. While tangible outcomes - such as access to water, sanitation, food, and education - are important, CLD approaches also cultivate transformative social change, such as strengthening social capital, social cohesion, self and group efficacy, to name but a few. When people engage in such practices they are more likely to sustain their collective action and strengthen among others, their resiliency.

**19. Do you train the community leaders before implementing the best practices?**

When to implement training, as well as the focus of such training, depends on the specific programs' goals and objectives.

**20. How do you generalize the best practices across the sociocultural attributes and environment?**

This was a realist review. Realist approaches assume that "nothing works everywhere or for everyone", and that context really does make a difference to both implementation and outcomes. We assume that generalization is therefore highly contingent on context. *Principles* (for example, 'build widespread participation') are more likely to be portable than *practices* per se.

Organizations can use the 11 Characteristics of CLD to reflect on their own programs and gauge their "CLD-ness". When thinking about best practices in terms of general characteristics of CLD, we do encourage organizations to adopt models that prioritizes development led by local communities. See Recommendations 1-4, [INCLUDE Report, 2021](#) p. 14. To support them in the review and development of such models, we encourage them to draw from the [CLD Assessment Tool](#).

**21. Collective action under some kind of voluntary leadership used to be the culture and tradition in many local communities. But for some years now, this tradition is being undermined by the liberal culture taking place. How to revive a culture of collective voluntary action in such contexts?**

This is a very important point. Collective action and volunteerism are nothing new, perhaps even expected in some communities. Such traditions of collective action and voluntary leadership are the strengths that community-led development interventions identify and build on. Additionally, our review found evidence that the development of a strong common cause or goal can contribute to collective action. A number of factors were necessary for successful action to occur: capacity development, collective dialogue and decision-making, mobilizing resources and support, and ownership and motivation. See [InCLuDE Report 2021](#), Sections 5.4.3 and 5.4.4, p.75-79.

As a reminder, this is the working definition of community-led development from the research: *Community-led development is a development approach in which local community members work together to identify goals that are important to them, develop and implement plans to achieve those goals, and create collaborative relationships internally and with external actors—all while building on community strengths and local leadership.*

**22. How do you redesign programs so as not to place an unequal burden on women for instance, in societies where women take the lead in development activities such as agriculture?**

Evidence in the review showed that a number of factors influenced women’s participation in programs. These included cultural expectations around interactions with men outside their own household, with mixed-gender groups reducing women’s participation in some programs. Other factors were illiteracy, teenage pregnancy, and early marriage, migration, time poverty, distance, and physical ability. Lack of energy due to malnutrition was also cited as a hindrance to participation in activities. Thus, programs will need to address these limitations and competing demands on women’s participation, for example providing on-site childcare or meals alongside training, or conducting separate women’s and men’s groups. During the program design stage, agencies should work closely with women to determine how interventions can be most appropriate for them, especially considering their work schedules, their cultural contexts, physical barriers and other norms and expectations informing their daily lives. See [InCLuDE Report 2021](#), Section 6.2.3 and 6.2.7, p.91 and 98.

**23. From your experience, what sort of successful systems or mechanisms to prevent corruption have been well implemented when local governments are involved?**

Reviewing strategies to combat corruption was outside the scope of this review. We did recognize the value of including local leaders as well as encouraging broad participation as possible ways of calling out elite capture and corruption. Broad participation, including participation by marginalized populations, can lead to greater responsiveness to corruption and support the courage and confidence to collectively speak-out against both elite capture and corruption.