

# COLLABORATING, LEARNING & ADAPTING CASE ANALYSIS: DEEP DIVE Research Methods

## PURPOSE

As part of its efforts to advance understandings about the effects and effectiveness of collaborating, learning, and adapting (CLA) in improving development outcomes, LEARN will conduct an in-depth review and comparison of two cases selected from the 2015 and 2016 CLA case competitions. The study is designed to offer more detailed, contextualized information about CLA approaches in specific technical sectors, as well as a cross-case analysis of the strengths and limitations, factors influencing success, long-term effects, and lessons learned within and across these efforts. Building on the successes of the CLA case competitions, this study will act as a one-to-two-year post-competition follow-up that examines the long(er)-term effects of these projects. In addition, through an analysis of case-relevant documents (e.g., project evaluations and reports) and key stakeholder interviews, the study will supplement and triangulate the self-reports of original case submissions to verify claims.

## QUESTIONS

As part of the EB4CLA workstream, this study seeks to assess case evidence about *whether intentional, systematic, and resourced approaches to CLA make plausible contributions to development outcomes. If so, how? And under what conditions?* Information from this study can help inform and strengthen programmatic and policy decisions related to the use of CLA for USAID staff, implementing partners, and other development actors.

Preliminary questions guiding this study include:

- 1) In what ways and to what extent was CLA integrated (i.e., intentional, systematic, and resourced) within each case?
- 2) What key factors supported or challenged the successful implementation of CLA? What factors, other than CLA, influenced the implementation and outcomes of this project (enablers, barriers, other influences)?



- 3) What kinds of evidence/key sources of learning most influenced decisions that led to changes in project strategies and activities?
- 4) What kinds of organizational changes and development outcomes resulted from this project? What evidence is there of CLA's contribution to these changes? How does actual evidence of contribution compare with expected evidence?
- 5) What are the key lessons from these cases that can guide integration of CLA into the design, implementation, and evaluation of future development efforts?
- 6) To what extent do these cases demonstrate that CLA approaches made a plausible contribution to development outcomes (evaluative, by case and across cases)?



© GLOBAL COMMUNITIES 2015

## RESEARCH DESIGN

This study will take a comparative case study approach to examining two cases from the 2015 and 2016 CLA case competition. It will use qualitative methods, including a secondary analysis of case competition submissions, analysis of case-related documents, and semi-structured interviews with two-to-three key stakeholders (e.g., project leaders, participants, partners, etc.) for each case. The goal is to describe similarities and differences in CLA implementation across contexts, as well as assess case evidence about CLA's contribution to organizational performance and development outcomes. Variables examined in the study include:

- **Independent Variables:** CLA institutionalization and integration, enabling conditions, CLA-related theory of change.
- **Dependent Variables:** Organizational change and development outcomes.

## CASE SELECTION

Case selection will seek to match cases along certain variables or conditions such as: the unit of analysis (e.g., USAID vs. implementing partners; project vs. organization), CLA-related theories of change, maturity of CLA integration, levels or types of outcomes, types of evidence, and judges' scores. It will seek diversity along other variables such as regional context, types of implementing partners, and/or technical sectors. Adequate corroborating evidence from case-related documents and access to stakeholders for interviews will be important preliminary considerations for selection. LEARN and PPL will determine other specific selection criteria for cases after reviewing supplementary case documents. Case selection procedures include:

- 1) Re-contact authors of high scoring cases in the 2015 and 2016 case competitions to request supplementary documents with corroboration of claims about CLA implementation and outcomes;
- 2) Review supplementary documents and sort cases by types and strength of corroborating evidence;
- 3) Decide on case selection criteria; and
- 4) Apply criteria to select cases for this study.

## DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

This study will combine Contribution Analysis (Mayne, 2012), Contribution Tracing (Befani & Stedman-Bryce, 2016), and Outcome Harvesting (Wilson-Grau & Britt, 2013) methods to guide data collection and analysis.<sup>1</sup> It will be conducted in three phases that build upon each other:

- **Phase 1:** The researcher will review the case competition materials and supporting documents to conduct an initial inductive analysis for each case of: CLA maturity and integration, barriers and enabling conditions, outcomes, lessons learned, and evidence of plausible contribution.<sup>2</sup> She will also use Contribution Analysis and Contribution Tracing methods, including: mapping the programmatic theory of change; identifying other factors (beyond the program and CLA) that may influence development outcomes; and describing types of evidence needed to support a causal claim.
- **Phase 2:** The researcher will design case-specific interview questions for key stakeholders to fill gaps, verify analysis, and address questions arising from the document review. She will use outcomes harvesting types of questions in the interviews to identify additional changes and outcomes since the cases were submitted. The analysis will triangulate data from interviews and documents and preliminary results will be shared with key case stakeholders for verification, correction, and supplementation (respondent validation).
- **Phase 3:** The researcher will develop a comparative analysis matrix to examine key variables across cases. She will also use an independent peer review process to assess evidence and CLA contribution claims for each case based on pre-established criteria.

## REPORTING AND SHARING

The study will result in a preliminary analysis for each case, as well as an analysis across cases that addresses the research questions.

This study is part of ongoing EB4CLA communications efforts and will also be shared via a USAID Learning Lab blog and other presentations for key stakeholders.

## DELIMITATIONS AND LIMITATIONS

This study focuses on comparing cases where CLA was successfully integrated into a project. It does not include comparisons with cases of unsuccessful CLA integration nor with counterfactuals where CLA was not used. This study cannot control for self-selection biases in the dataset. It also cannot control for missing or thin data, gaps in evidence within cases, or for inconsistencies in evidence between cases. These issues will create limitations to the interpretation and generalizability of findings.

## VERIFICATION

To enhance the reliability and validity of coding, the researcher will use the CLA maturity matrix and other resources to operationalize variables.<sup>3</sup> The researcher will also conduct a pilot case to refine questions, improve operationalization of variables, and identify relevant analytical frameworks in the initial stages of data collection. Triangulation from multiple data sources (i.e., self-reported cases, supplemental documentation, and stakeholder interviews) will help verify claims and may offset self-reporting biases. In addition, the researcher's use of multiple analytical methods, respondent validation, and independent peer ratings can help support the trustworthiness of findings.

1 Mayne, J. (2012). Contribution analysis: Coming of age? *Evaluation*, 18(3), 270–280; Befani, B. and Stedman-Bryce, G. (2016) Process Tracing and Bayesian updating for impact evaluation. *Evaluation* 19(2): 1–19; Wilson-Grau, R. & Britt, H. (2013). *Outcome Harvesting*. Ford Foundation (Mena Office).

2 Note that CLA maturity in particular will be difficult to determine from background documentation. This will be iteratively determined through the research phases.

3 Kaarbo, J. & Beasley, R. (December, 2002). A Practical Guide to the Comparative Case Study Method. *Political Psychology* 20(2):369–391