INTEGRATING LOCAL KNOWLEDGE
IN DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMMING

July 2022

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ACRONYMS

ALPS	Accountability, Learning, and Planning System
CoRD	Centre of Resilient Development
DARPE	Development Assistance Roadmap Portal in the Middle East
ICCCAD	International Centre for Climate Change and Development
IFRC	International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies
KM4Dev	Knowledge Management for Development
KMOL	Knowledge Management and Organizational Learning
MCLD	Movement for Community-led Development
NGO	Nongovernmental Organization
SALT	Support, Appreciate, Learn, Transfer
SWAG	Stand With A Girl
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The objective of this report, *Integrating Local Knowledge in Development Programming* is to share knowledge of how development donors and implementing organizations leverage local knowledge to inform programming. In a [recent speech](#) at Georgetown University, United States Agency for International Development (USAID) Administrator Samantha Power said, *"As Americans with a fraught history living up to our own values, we've got to approach this work with intention and humility. But the entire development community needs to interrogate the traditional power dynamics of donor-driven development and look for ways to amplify the local voices of those who too often have been left out of the conversation."* To that end, USAID's Agency Knowledge Management and Organizational Learning (KMOL) function facilitated conversations with multilateral and bilateral donors and local organizations to understand how organizations define, utilize, and incorporate local knowledge into their programmatic and operational activities.

Using qualitative tools to gather data for this report, the research team explored five overarching themes:

1. Local Knowledge Nomenclature and Definitions
2. Best Practices
3. Outcomes
4. Ethics and Power Dynamics
5. Challenges

FINDINGS

LOCAL KNOWLEDGE NOMENCLATURE AND DEFINITIONS

One of the most consistent recommendations the research team heard was that organizations should be flexible with terminology and use terms that resonate most with the communities with whom they work. Local knowledge can present in different forms, many of which cannot be captured by quantitative metrics. Thus, organizations should work with local actors to communicate knowledge in ways that reflect the complexity of their lived experiences.

Understanding of local knowledge was predominantly evident in organizational cultures rather than written down as formal definitions or frameworks. Through integration at every step of the development process, as well as constant reflection on who controls resources and narratives, organizations more effectively incorporated local knowledge into their practices.

BEST PRACTICES

Several elements are key to successfully integrating local knowledge into development work and achieving the best outcomes for local communities. Throughout our interviews, there was consensus

that best practices include: 1) building trust and relationships, 2) ensuring participatory processes, and 3) integrating local and scientific knowledge.

First, building trust requires development practitioners to listen to communities before proposing new interventions and to accept and understand they may not be experts in local contexts because they are external to the communities. Furthermore, organizations must build meaningful relationships with local communities to establish trust and successfully integrate local knowledge into programs. Second, a participatory process ensures respect for local knowledge is incorporated throughout the development process. Local actors are best positioned to understand community problems and their robust participation is essential to understanding and incorporating local knowledge. Finally, local knowledge and scientific knowledge are closely related and can be used in tandem. Integrating the two knowledge forms can result in contextually appropriate solutions that produce better outcomes.

OUTCOMES

There was also widespread agreement that incorporating local knowledge leads to more effective and successful programs. Organizations reported that when local knowledge is valued, integrated with other forms of knowledge, and used to inform every component or stage of a project, the results are: 1) improvement in the quality of services, 2) stronger relationships and trust, and 3) cultivation of local ownership and increased sustainability of outcomes.

First, local knowledge leads to more effective and successful programs because thoroughly understanding the local context can improve access to services and develop solutions that are more adaptive to local needs. Designing and adapting programming to reflect the lived experiences of community members also addresses the root causes of issues rather than just the symptoms. Additionally, organizations found that locally generated solutions derived from local knowledge and community input led to successful outcomes, often in a more efficient manner than solutions proposed from outside the community. Second, the process of identifying and using local knowledge strengthens relationships and trust between external organizations and local stakeholders. When new interventions were designed by external organizations in partnership with local stakeholders, they were more readily accepted by the communities. Finally, using local knowledge is an integral step toward cultivating local ownership, where local stakeholders are involved in and have decision-making power at every step of the project. This increases the likelihood that the project will be successful and sustainable.

ETHICS AND POWER DYNAMICS

Organizations face ethical questions when addressing the power dynamics surrounding local knowledge and development. Local knowledge is situated in a local context, which inherently includes a framework of power dynamics between actors both outside and within the community. Organizations emphasized the importance of untangling the layers of power embedded in development work and having conversations about how to best address them. When talking about addressing power dynamics between organizations and local communities, our conversations touched upon four prominent

questions: 1) Which knowledge is valid? 2) Who holds the resources? 3) How do we avoid extractive practices when working with local knowledge? and, 4) How do we address biases?

First, local knowledge is often placed in opposition to Western, scientific knowledge and often deemed an inferior form of knowledge. Its validity is discounted because of its anecdotal and subjective nature. Second, there is a power imbalance between external and local organizations because the former hold the majority of funding and resources; this feeds a dynamic in which external development organizations have greater power to define local realities than local communities. The relationship between external and local organizations is framed by funding, and development interventions are shaped by funding requirements. Third, extractive practices preserve the power imbalance between external organizations and local communities and strip local communities of their agency and control over their own experiences and knowledge. Finally, development practitioners must be aware of and actively address their own internal biases. On an organizational level, diverse teams and approaches are essential to mitigating biases, which in turn is essential to the openness required to achieve shared understanding of local realities and true partnership in pursuing local priorities.

In terms of power dynamics within local communities, organizations underlined the importance of recognizing the power structures and social arrangements embedded within communities and ensuring local knowledge is not used to reinforce unequal power dynamics at the local level. Additionally, organizations highlighted the need for interventions to approach issues with an intersectional lens.

CHALLENGES

Interviewees identified three key challenges in integrating local knowledge within development practices: 1) establishing the validity of local knowledge in development, 2) balancing community priorities with those of external organizations, and 3) navigating power dynamics and biases.

First, our interviews and comprehensive literature review indicated there is a common assumption that the only valid knowledge is "scientific" evidence, a narrative which implies that knowledge derived from communities' shared and longstanding experience is unimportant. Many noted this is a result of colonial dynamics and negatively affects the holders of local knowledge. Second, integrating local ownership throughout development projects is a difficult, costly, and time-consuming process. However, as long as donors place an undue premium on efficiency, obstacles will arise between the goal of local knowledge and ownership and its actual implementation. Third, in order to address power dynamics between donor organizations and local communities, donors must ask uncomfortable questions to ensure intentions are genuine instead of tokenistic. Moreover, donors also must be cognizant of the power dynamics/social hierarchies that exist within local communities. Ensuring all people are represented in the knowledge gathered, instead of just the loudest voices in a community, is one of the most concrete things organizations can do to address local power dynamics.

METHODS

Prior to reaching out to organizations, the team developed a set of research questions to serve as a framework for collecting and synthesizing insights and lessons learned from interviewees. Through an open call for interviewees on the Knowledge Management for Development (KM4Dev) community of practice, as well as through outreach to team members' professional networks, the team identified representatives from 25 development organizations to interview and also requested materials to review, many of which are linked in this report. The interview process was guided by a questionnaire structured around the research questions with room for open-ended conversations. The findings are shared in this report and were also shared in a [webinar](#) recorded on May 17, 2022.

FUTURE OF DEVELOPMENT

The future of development should include intentional integration of local knowledge and community members' input into development programming. To this end, many organizations noted that donors can make a concerted effort to modify their current practices to create an environment that values and utilizes local knowledge. Donors can also examine the power dynamics inherent in their development practices and funding relationships and work to unlearn colonial legacies. Throughout this report, it is apparent from our conversations that local knowledge is not a silver bullet to reforming international development, but is an essential component for organizations and communities to achieve more successful, sustainable, and equitable development outcomes.

RESULTS AND THEMES

LOCAL KNOWLEDGE NOMENCLATURE AND DEFINITIONS

"We must frame knowledge in ways that reflect the complexities that people live in."

- TETRATECH INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The meaning of "local knowledge" varies dramatically between communities and is often contested. For example, Christopher Antweiler's analysis of development literature from 1960–1997 found more than 20 different interpretations of the term. It may be daunting to understand the many connotations of "local knowledge," but the diversity in ways communities understand the concept should not deter organizations from integrating it into their practices. Rather, our findings suggest development organizations need to abandon rigid definitions and frameworks that render it impossible to fully capture the spectrum of value that local knowledge has to offer. Organizations should instead be flexible with terminology and use the terms that resonate most with the communities with whom they work.

TETRATECH INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Staff at TetraTech International Development provided an example from Papua New Guinea in which Mama Mary, an influential member of a local tribe, was asked to provide input to an international nongovernmental organization (NGO). Oxfam wanted to categorize her input into their "logical framework," but the form, content, and reality of her contributions were so nuanced and varied that they could not be easily or accurately translated into this Western framework imposed by the NGO's headquarters. People's lived experiences are complex; the key takeaway from this example is that organizations should work with local actors to communicate knowledge in ways that reflect the complexity of their lived experiences.

WHY TALK ABOUT LANGUAGE?

As Head of Bond Media Maryam Mohson explains, in the context of development policy, language is only part of the picture when it comes to decolonization but it is a good place to start. Mohson makes the argument that language choice can perpetuate power imbalances. In this context, some organizations' lack of internal understanding of local knowledge is likely the unwitting extension of a colonial mindset that devalues local knowledge and discourse and, by extension, local populations. In the research team's conversations with local actors, many expressed how the lack of an institutional attempt by donor organizations to understand and integrate local knowledge creates the perception that donors are attempting to impose their views and cultural norms to replace local customs. The Development

Assistance Roadmap Portal in the Middle East (DARPE) noted that while development organizations may have important information to share, effective communication at a grassroots level often requires use of culturally specific language. DARPE suggested the depth of community knowledge is best captured in the community's own language(s).

Researcher [Ryan J. Stefani](#) argues that ambiguous language around terms like "sustainable development" or "local knowledge" enables a culture that obfuscates the importance of these terms. These terms are generally understood in the abstract, but once development policy has to be tangibly implemented, they fall out of use.

However, having a single definition of a term may also be counterproductive. Donors and other development organizations' use of specialized terminology that is often opaque to the actors they seek to help can reinforce the perception of donors as insular and uninterested in incorporating the interests of others into their work. Stefani concludes, "As a result, it is the responsibility of practitioners to inquire, understand, and use the various terms and meanings that are given by those involved in 'sustainable development.'" As we will discuss below, the same can be said about the term "local knowledge," which we use throughout this report.

HOW HAVE ORGANIZATIONS ATTEMPTED TO DEFINE LOCAL KNOWLEDGE?

Most organizations interviewed did not have specific definitions for local knowledge, but rather followed general guidelines around the term. Some found that local knowledge was self-explanatory within their organizational cultures, while others felt they were still early in the process of understanding it. Regardless, most chose to operate with a broad, flexible framework that could be adapted to various local contexts.

The Movement for Community-led Development (MCLD) offered a definition guide unique in its specificity:

> Community knowledge is knowledge embedded in a community. It refers to the intergenerational traditional wisdom, life experiences, artistic expressions, skills, relationships, systems of communication, decision-making and conflict resolution, and understanding of the local context that exists within every community. It encompasses both tacit and explicit knowledge, and is locally and collectively produced, applied, and innovated.

Through this definition guide, MCLD emphasizes that local knowledge can present in different forms, many of which cannot be captured by quantitative metrics. Thus, it encourages MCLD members to incorporate diverse, nontraditional knowledge forms into their practice.

While TetraTech did not have an explicit definition like MCLD, they shared a similar understanding of how local knowledge is intergenerational, experience-based, and embedded in a geographic context or environment:

> Local or indigenous knowledge is the knowledge used by people local to a particular geographic location, used to make a living within that local environment. It's a body of knowledge built up by a group of people through generations and is passed on.

World Vision emphasized using the term "local ownership" over "local knowledge." For World Vision, "ownership" more clearly reflects the process of integrating local/indigenous priorities within development policy and practice. World Vision observed institutions that only cultivate local knowledge forms without considering the concept of ceding ownership run the risk of implementing extractive practices.

Understanding of local knowledge was predominantly evident in organizational culture rather than in formal definitions and frameworks. The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), Inter-American Development Bank, CARE, FHI 360, MINGAnet, Kaizen, and ActionAid all explicitly emphasized how local knowledge is so integral at every stage of their development processes that it is hard to separate it from their operations. For many of the organizations we interviewed, prioritizing local knowledge was seen not as a separate project, nor as a step in the overall design of development policy, but rather was integrated throughout their program cycles. ActionAid mentioned they constantly ask, "Who has control over resources and narratives?" in order to ensure the comprehensive integration of local knowledge into its practices.

BEST PRACTICES

CULTIVATING TRUST AND RELATIONSHIPS

"You [development organizations] can only move at the speed of trust."

- SALANGA

Interviewees overwhelmingly identified trust as a key factor in the success of integrating local knowledge into development work and achieving the best outcomes for communities. Without trust from local communities, organizations are not able to achieve positive results because meaningful partnerships are foundational to their work. Interviewees continuously shared that programs executed without community trust generally do not lead to sustainable and/or best results.

Listening to communities before proposing new interventions is critical to building trust. For example, when Biovision Africa Trust begins working with a new community, it first learns about their current practices and challenges. Then, after listening to local experiences and facilitating conversations, Biovision Africa Trust introduces its own ideas. This approach demonstrates respect for local knowledge and establishes a baseline of trust before implementation. The International Centre for Climate Change and Development (ICCCAD) also emphasized the importance of listening, stating, "Our job is to listen first and then [share] later." ICCCAD seeks to learn, understand, and value local

knowledge and practices around climate change adaptation, which in turn fosters trust between the community and ICCCAD. Once trust is present, ICCCAD introduces new adaptations and provides scientific explanations for new potential approaches as it recognizes that climate change is happening rapidly, and traditional adaptations may not work as effectively as they have in the past. This "listening first" strategy leads to enhanced outcomes because it first helps ICCCAD understand local knowledge and then enables it to build on what has already been done. Through listening and building trust, ICCCAD introduces adaptations that are relevant to the community and compatible with existing knowledge systems. Furthermore, local actors are more likely to embrace these new interventions because they already know and trust ICCCAD.

The Global Fund for Children recognized there can be a sense of hierarchy when outside actors enter communities because organizations often hold substantial power while communities are viewed as mere recipients of programming. Organizations enter communities with their own goals and priorities in which local knowledge is often not included and therefore devalued. Listening can help alleviate this type of power dynamic between organizations and communities and foster trust. A "listening first" approach is essential to building trust because it centers local stakeholders as the knowledgeable experts in their communities, rather than assuming that development practitioners and organizations know what is best. But as Catholic Relief Services added, development actors must value the local knowledge of a community and, "[Listen] to hear, not to edit." This process requires development practitioners to accept they may not be the experts in local contexts. Furthermore, the listening process must be authentic and incorporated throughout the development process for trust to develop. As GIZ noted, really listening to communities takes time, and it can be difficult to balance this time-intensive process with donors' desire for efficiency. Nevertheless, multiple organizations emphasized that genuine listening efforts result in more successful programs that integrate local knowledge.

While listening is critical, organizations indicated the most important way to establish trust and achieve successful outcomes that integrate local knowledge is to establish meaningful relationships with local actors, which can most effectively be achieved through a sustained presence in a community.

For example, CARE recognizes the project-based development model operates on a short timeline that does not lend itself to establishing deep relationships with local communities. Therefore, CARE tries to maintain its local partnerships between projects to foster organic growth in the relationships over many years. Sustained presence in a community leads to deeper trust, which then enables organizations to better understand local knowledge, leading to better outcomes. ICCCAD also mentioned the difficulty of short program life cycles. It said trust can only be established through long-term relationships, which cannot occur if an organization leaves a community once a particular project is finished. ICCCAD addresses this problem by partnering with universities because they generally do not rely on project-based funding, meaning they are sometimes able to maintain relationships and monitor progress long after a program ends. Universities are also trusted institutions in many communities and may have a better understanding of local knowledge than external development practitioners. While a university partnership approach has worked well for organizations like ICCCAD, organizations like MCLD cautioned that universities can also be extractive institutions that do not always represent local interests or show respect for local knowledge. Some universities have a history of appropriating local

knowledge by learning from local communities and publishing their findings in journals without the consent of the communities involved. Additionally, communities are not able to access the publications written based on their own knowledge because many are behind paywalls. TetraTech also mentioned that partnering with a university does not necessarily promote localization because universities are often beholden to donors. They explained, "Universities might include local teams but often these people are just enumerators and not actually engaged in analysis or project design." With these differing perspectives in mind, it is crucial to consider local contexts when determining the best strategies to establish relationships with local actors.

In addition to longevity, breadth is also important to building relationships and trust. While some organizations prioritized specific stakeholders such as community elders or youth leaders, there was a consensus that relationships should be fostered with as many individuals and groups as possible. Chemonics underscored that local knowledge is not held evenly among communities and different subgroups may have different insights. Older women, for example, may be privy to knowledge not available to men or girls. Including stakeholders from various backgrounds can better account for the different levels of knowledge people hold and enable programs to address the needs of all community members. Interviewees commonly cited Civil society organizations, political leaders, village elders, feminist activists, and youth as key stakeholders to engage. Extensive partnerships with diverse actors resulted in widespread trust rather than trust merely among elite decision-makers, leading to more sustainable and scalable projects that incorporated the knowledge of many community members.

PARTICIPATORY PROCESS

"Incorporating local knowledge is central to a successful project from the beginning."

- C.A.R.E.

Engaging with community stakeholders, fostering local participation, and including local knowledge throughout the development process is a critical component for success. Local knowledge can be leveraged and integrated into all phases of a program cycle, from planning to evaluation. A concept that came up frequently during our conversations was that community feedback is not enough to achieve successful programming outcomes. Organizations should focus on participatory processes that leverage local actors' input and feedback through all parts of programmatic activities, not just when validating program results. Incorporating local knowledge is especially important at the planning stage to ensure development projects are addressing community needs rather than fulfilling a project solely promoted by external parties. ActionAid recognized this potential problem and stated, "People know better the context they live in—it's artificial for an external entity to come in and plan a project. We start from the people's realities." ActionAid prioritizes the inclusion of community knowledge into programming and supports and encourages community members to identify their community's needs.

Similarly, The Global Fund for Children supports communities to conduct self-assessments to discover their own goals rather than impose externally developed projects on them. This practice recognizes that local actors are best positioned to understand community problems. By respecting local perspectives, organizations can ensure communities are invested in a project from the beginning. World Vision also noted that if local participation and respect for local knowledge is not built into the design phase, it is almost impossible to have meaningful local engagement later on. If a project is based on foreign knowledge systems, it may not seem relevant to community members and may conflict with their local practices. Furthermore, World Vision noted that community participation in monitoring and evaluation is unhelpful if the project is not addressing a real community need in the first place. Establishing local engagement from the outset of a project sets a precedent of participation throughout the process.

While there was widespread agreement that a participatory process that respects local knowledge is necessary, some organizations went further by emphasizing the need for a broader power shift away from development organizations and toward communities. Salanga, ActionAid, and Network for Empowered Aid Response all emphasized that a true community-led approach requires examining who has power over key decisions in programming and evaluation. These organizations underscored that merely respecting local knowledge is not enough; only when local actors drive the agenda, control resources, and hold decision-making power is the program truly community-led. TetraTech noted that when these elements are in place, people's lives are significantly improved. Communities realize their knowledge is valuable and they have the ability to solve their own problems long after a project ends.

Just as there were differences in the extent of community engagement considered necessary for success, organizations shared many different approaches to formalizing guidelines for local participation and the use of local knowledge. Biovision Africa Trust, MCLD, and Salanga all noted the importance of flexibility in community engagement requirements. They mentioned that while particular methodologies may work in one area, they may not work in other areas. Knowledge systems and cultural contexts vary widely, necessitating different approaches. Thus, practitioners should adapt to local needs rather than rigidly follow a set of pre-determined metrics. IFRC shared a similar sentiment, stating they do not have fixed rules or methodologies but instead use best practices and general guidance. According to IFRC, this approach is more participatory and accounts for different contexts.

FHI 360 has rigorous monitoring and evaluation systems to ensure communities are involved throughout a project, but like the aforementioned organizations, they recognize the importance of being able to incorporate feedback and adapt as new circumstances arise. FHI 360 found that oftentimes conversations with local actors lead to new ideas and approaches that could not have been foreseen in the existing evaluation system; therefore, processes should be flexible enough to account for these changes.

ActionAid also has robust organizational guidelines regarding community participation detailed in its [Accountability, Learning, and Planning System (ALPS) document](#). This document outlines how units should conduct annual "participatory review and reflection processes." Additionally, the ALPS helps ActionAid to ensure, "Planning is participatory and puts analysis of power relations and a commitment to addressing rights—particularly women's rights—at the heart of all our processes." ActionAid

recognizes there are power imbalances between international development organizations and local communities that can negatively impact programmatic success. Participatory planning that explicitly recognizes power relations and centers community needs is one way ActionAid mitigates this power imbalance. Furthermore, through a participatory process, ALPS allows for local actors to bring in their contextual knowledge to inform all parts of programmatic activities.

Organizations took a spectrum of approaches in formalizing community participation and leveraging local knowledge for programmatic activities, from complete flexibility to extensive guidance. Each organization's approach worked well for the organization and it seems each organization's culture and operations influences what is the most useful approach for that organization. Local communities also can play an important role in deciding how organizations monitor and evaluate participation. TetraTech emphasized that quantitative metrics may be useful to an organization's headquarters but may not be a meaningful measure for community members. Therefore, local actors should be involved in determining the goals and measurements that are relevant to their contexts and communities.

LOCAL AND SCIENTIFIC KNOWLEDGE WORKING IN TANDEM

"The community might not know how to describe the issue in scientific terms, but the knowledge is already embedded into their practices."

- SOLIDARIDAD

Many organizations recognize local knowledge and scientific knowledge are closely related. Multiple organizations mentioned being comfortable utilizing both knowledge forms in tandem, as they are [complementary rather than dichotomous](). The integration of knowledge forms was most evident in organizations addressing agricultural or climate change issues. Communities often engaged in ecological practices that had been in place for generations, and this local knowledge mirrored scientific methods, even if community members could not articulate the empirical basis for their actions. Solidaridad noted that the knowledge was essentially the same, but local actors and scientists simply had different ways of understanding these practices. Local farmers drew on traditional practices and ecological knowledge passed down through generations. In contrast, scientists arrived at their knowledge through repeated experimentation and empirical observation. Although the knowledge systems informing each group were different, the resulting practices were the same. Biovision Africa Trust articulated a similar experience; it noted that farmers with which it worked understood which plants should be sown near each other, employed crop rotation, and utilized natural fertilizers, all practices that are foundational to scientific agricultural methods.

Many organizations did not endeavor to supplant existing systems because they recognized the value of local strategies. Instead, they augmented local knowledge with scientific practices that could make the local approaches more effective. Both Solidaridad and Biovision Africa Trust emphasized that scientific

knowledge should not be applied the same way in every instance; these and other organizations shared scientific knowledge so that local communities could utilize the new information in ways that made sense for their particular needs.

Organizations addressing disaster and climate change also reported substantial success in integrating local knowledge with other knowledge forms. The Centre of Resilient Development (CoRD) helps communities construct resilient buildings to withstand natural disasters. They begin every project by assessing the local community's current practices. Many communities have already adapted their building strategies based on the natural disasters in their region and offer a valuable context-specific approach. However, because climate change shifts conditions so rapidly, sometimes traditional practices do not work as well as they did in the past. CoRD compares current interventions with empirical best practices and finds a way to combine both approaches to create safer and more resilient buildings based on current climate change conditions. Because CoRD starts with existing local knowledge and augments it with scientific knowledge, local actors are more likely to accept CoRD's proposed solutions because they are not entirely new interventions but rather enhance the solutions communities are already implementing.

Local knowledge and scientific knowledge are not in opposition; rather, the two knowledge forms often overlap. Furthermore, knowledge is not a fixed entity, and both knowledge forms change as they interact with each other and as community needs arise. Organizations recognize that neither local knowledge nor scientific knowledge is a silver bullet, but both can be used together to produce better outcomes.

OUTCOMES

Overall, organizations resoundingly agreed that incorporating local knowledge has led to more effective and successful programs. Valuing local knowledge not only strengthens relationships and trust between organizations and local stakeholders, but also ensures programs are genuinely addressing community priorities. Importantly, placing local knowledge at the core of an organization's programming means it informs every component of the project in some way. Local knowledge is valued and synthesized with other forms of knowledge, and placing it at the center ensures that the local community is engaged at every step of the process. As a result, community members develop ownership over the project and results, which improves project sustainability.

LOCALLY GENERATED SOLUTIONS IMPROVE THE QUALITY OF SERVICES

Local knowledge leads to more effective and successful programs because thoroughly understanding the local context can improve access to services and develop solutions that are more adaptive to local needs. For example, FHI 360's HIV-focused programming in Nepal was struggling to reach transgender individuals and provide them with HIV treatment. To address this shortcoming, FHI 360 conversed with local stakeholders and learned about the seasonal migration patterns of Nepalese transgender communities. Many transgender individuals migrate from Nepal to India during certain seasons, and FHI

360 leveraged this local knowledge to shape the program to reach these community members once they returned to Nepal. If FHI 360 had missed this important contextual knowledge, the program would not have reached these migratory individuals and connected them to HIV treatment. This is a clear example of how incorporating local knowledge and designing and adapting programming to reflect the lived experiences of community members can lead to better outcomes—not just for the organization, but also for the communities it serves. Instead of fixing the symptoms, successful programs address the root causes of issues.

The creation of locally generated solutions—a frequent driver for drawing on local knowledge—often leads to successful results. Biovision Africa Trust works with farmers to improve agricultural practices and has found strategies and new ideas based on community members' extensive experiences that lead to high-quality outcomes. For example, in order to control farm pests, organizations like Biovision Africa Trust would have traditionally proposed using pesticide. The local farmers with whom Biovision Africa Trust worked, however, already knew that planting certain herbs near their crops could also control pests. This method was not only ecologically friendly and sustainable, but also more cost-effective, as fertilizer was far more expensive than the herbs. In this case, the pest problem was efficiently solved by local and traditional practices.

Another case of locally generated solutions involved a Solidaridad project to address an outbreak of foot-and-mouth disease. The disease was highly contagious and could be transmitted by animals moving between markets, so Solidaridad informed the local community that it was important to disinfect the animals to curb the spread of the disease. Based on this information, the local community developed their own solution to create a roadblock at a popular fish market to dispense disinfectant, since they knew that almost everyone bought fish in that area. They mobilized to manage the roadblock themselves and, within two months, stopped outbreaks from occurring. While Solidaridad provided the information that disinfectant would curb the disease, the local community ultimately generated an effective solution based on their local context and implemented it from start to finish.

STRONGER RELATIONSHIPS AND TRUST LEAD TO MORE SUCCESSFUL OUTCOMES

Part of the reason why local knowledge improves programming outcomes is the process of identifying and using it strengthens relationships and trust between external organizations and local stakeholders. Local communities more readily accept new interventions when organizations and community members have strong relationships based on trust and respect.

CoRD recognizes the importance of trust to program success, stating, "You can't come in and say, 'You need to transition now and use this new material [to build your houses].'" By relating to local knowledge and integrating it into the wider knowledge framework, CoRD builds trust with communities and is able to work with them to transition to new, more resilient building materials better suited for adapting to changing climate conditions in their region.

Solidaridad also recognizes the importance of relationships with local leaders and regularly involves them in program planning. When Solidaridad expands their projects to a new area, they prioritize discussing their program with the community's leaders and elders. In one project, Solidaridad proposed erecting fencing in the community to manage the movement of livestock. When they brought the idea to the community leaders, the leaders said it would not be appropriate to erect fencing since their community does not close off areas. The leaders came up with an alternative solution, where their traditional court would enforce a system of regulations and fines to serve the same purpose. This solution effectively controlled animal movement because community members respected and listened to the leaders and elders. In this case, the relationship between Solidaridad and the community leaders was crucial in implementing an effective intervention.

LOCAL OWNERSHIP AND SUSTAINABILITY

Many development organizations view local knowledge as a prerequisite for outcomes that represent the interests of a community, recognizing that communities know their needs better than anyone else. As Stand With A Girl (SWAG) explained, "You have to come to a point where you admit and accept the community as experts in their own issues!" Some CARE projects, for example, use the SenseMaker method, a qualitative approach where stories surrounding an issue are shared by local community members. CARE then looks at patterns and common threads that emerge from these stories to identify local stakeholders and inform and develop their programming. Similarly, The Constellation employs the Support, Appreciate, Learn, Transfer (SALT) method in which community members create an action plan based on the issues they face and their experiences. Through this method, planning is informed by community members' lived experiences and works toward a vision held by the community.

Organizations stressed this latter point: that it is crucial for local stakeholders to establish the changes they want to see in their communities. Using local knowledge and setting relevant priorities that resonate with communities is an integral link toward cultivating local ownership. Ownership is developed when local stakeholders are involved and have decision-making power at every step of the project (from design and implementation, to monitoring, evaluation, and adaptation). This increases the likelihood that the project will be successfully implemented in the community and then continue to effectively operate in the community over time.

World Vision's approach heavily focuses on cultivating local ownership because it has found projects are more successful when community members have a major stake and say in their implementation. World Vision's Critical Path approach, a formalized process for using participatory methods along the project life cycle, ensures that community members are setting the project's agenda and are joint leaders at every stage of the project, from design to adaptations. Previously, World Vision's project baselines led to the creation of reports and recommendations that were not implemented by local communities. After updating their practices to reflect local knowledge on community needs, involve local community members, and cultivate local ownership, World Vision found communities immediately used and acted on the results.

WORLD VISION ZAMBIA

In Chipapa, Zambia, World Vision facilitated a community-led baseline in which community members led key parts of the process (i.e., data collection, analysis, and eventual benchmark setting.) World Vision identified community leaders by asking children, parents, and schools the same question: "Who would you turn to if there are any issues with your children?" Respondents identified 73 stakeholders from both formal and informal entities who championed issues related to children. World Vision brought this multi-level group together to participate in capacity-strengthening sessions. The group subsequently collected qualitative and quantitative data in their community and analyzed and interpreted their findings. In this case, World Vision relied on local knowledge to form this group of stakeholders to lead the baseline.

World Vision was surprised by the immediate community response in the baseline results:

Once the findings came out, there was no waiting, they just jumped on it! The same group [of stakeholders] organized and went to their local government with their results and demands. They weren't waiting for a program to be established or for a donor to approve the report. Whatever they found, they used immediately.

CARE also successfully cultivated local ownership to achieve positive results. Community members designed and drove the [Tipping Point Initiative](#) project. CARE held advocacy events, engaged different participant groups (girls, boys, parents, community leaders, etc.) around key topics related to child marriage, and created public spaces for community dialogues. CARE reported that by harnessing local knowledge on the root causes of child marriage and involving multiple key stakeholders to address the issue, the program successfully loosened key social norms restricting girls' opportunities and autonomy and facilitated girls' empowerment and greater sense of agency.

SOLIDARIDAD

One of Solidaridad's projects aimed to improve outcomes for cattle farmers by addressing their breeding practices. The community previously thought that the biggest animal would produce the best meat, but Solidaridad's analysis found that the younger cattle actually sell the best on the market. To convince farmers that this was the case, the organization organized trips for farmers to see first-hand the other stages of the meat supply chain, like the meat-grading process. This knowledge empowered farmers to change their practices. Solidaridad also created and shared a grading app tool for farmers to judge their cattle's meat by themselves, which left the decision-making power in the farmers' hands.

One crucial point to emphasize is that local ownership over projects can also contribute to the sustainability of project outcomes and build a community's capacity to address issues in the future. Sense of ownership incentivizes community members to continue the successful components of the project because it effectively addresses their needs and aligns with their culture, beliefs, and values. Additionally, incorporating local knowledge is a two-way street and can help strengthen local capacity. Community members not only gain resources and new skills, but the project experience can instill community cohesiveness that is crucial to enacting further change in the community. The UN Trust Fund to End Violence Against Women highlighted how incorporating local actors in the evaluation stage of the project allows them to also learn from the results and understand the next steps. This generates knowledge and opportunities for learning within the community, not solely for the donor. Strengthening local capacity is also a major long-term goal for ICCCAD as it invests in providing youth and other local leaders with the tools to address their issues without ICCCAD. This approach to development focuses on capacity strengthening and fostering long-term leadership of the community rather than the organization. While success can be measured in many different ways for ICCCAD it is, "Not based on quantifiable metrics like how many trees were planted, but [based] on if the community has learned something and can sustain change."

ETHICS AND POWER DYNAMICS

When talking about local knowledge, it is impossible to ignore the power dynamics at play. Power, who holds it, and existing hierarchies foreground all of development work and are integral to any conversation on local knowledge. Local knowledge is always situated in a local context, which inherently includes a framework of power dynamics between actors both outside and within the community. This is what Navanita Bhattacharya at TetraTech terms "the politics of local knowledge." She contends that local knowledge is not just about finding new or alternative forms of knowledge and ideas; it is also about integrating local knowledge into development practices as one part of a larger movement to recognize the value and importance of local voices and place them at the forefront of development. It is a movement with the eventual goal of grassroots development, a process directed and owned by local communities.

Bhattacharya emphasized the importance of discussing broader power dynamics at play when talking about local knowledge and insists that organizations need to continuously ask reflective, self-critical questions on their position within the politics of local knowledge, such as:

> Who holds the power behind knowledge? How can localization shift power to the Global South [and communities]? How can localization do decolonization work without tokenizing? Are we truly committed to localization and sharing power, or will we just share resources within Global North entities?

Bhattacharya cautions against allowing these conversations to fall into performativity. Spaces to discuss these topics, she notes, should not be sanitized environments where people fear repercussions if they speak out against the status quo. These conversations must be backed up with action by organizations.

Furthermore, Bhattacharya mentions that initiatives to "decolonize" development can become tokenistic if they are done superficially. One example she brings up is her experience when universities partner with local teams. While this partnership supposedly places both groups on equal footing, the local teams are often not allowed to be engaged with the project design or analysis, which negates their inclusion in the first place.

Bhattacharya's points on the "politics of knowledge" were echoed by many other organizations. For example, several organizations mentioned that development practitioners are used to teaching others and giving instructions, which reinforces the hierarchy between them and local communities. Power was a remarkably prevalent theme that came up again and again in conversations with organizations. They spoke to how they approach their development work situated in the complicated, tangled layers of power—between the organizations themselves and the communities and also among community members. These conversations are ongoing within organizations and are incredibly valuable to have, even though these topics may be challenging to talk about and often do not resolve with a single or easy "right" answer.

POWER DYNAMICS BETWEEN ORGANIZATIONS AND THE LOCAL COMMUNITY

A. WHICH KNOWLEDGE IS VALID?

Local knowledge is often placed in opposition to Western, scientific knowledge and has historically been thought of as an inferior form of knowledge. [Analyses](#) show that this dynamic is informed by the legacies of colonialism and imperialism, even as it is still widely found across development programs and affects the relationships between development practitioners and local communities. This dynamic can result from a failure to find ways to combine community experience and knowledge with standards of evidence derived via scientific methods. For instance, the Global Fund for Children relayed its experience with development organizations dismissing as "anecdotal" information that communities consider to be important results, rather than finding ways to work with different types of knowledge. Furthermore, Solidaridad described how colleagues in academia often appear to view scientific knowledge as incompatible with local knowledge, looking down on the latter as a less valid form of evidence due to its supposed subjectivity. These stories speak to the broader power dynamics at play regarding who decides what form of knowledge is valuable and, consequently, who to include in conversations that define development challenges and the development process.

B. WHO HOLDS RESOURCES?

Although both donors and practitioner organizations can contribute to marginalizing local knowledge, donors' control over development resources plays a particular role in driving this dynamic. Many organizations talked about the power dynamics among donors, NGOs, and local communities. Donors' control over funding translates into disproportionate power in determining development agendas, approaches, evidence, and measures of success. This can lead to the relationship between donors and organizations becoming framed by funding, rather than around a common purpose to address pressing

community issues. When local knowledge is not used to develop program priorities, organizations have to tailor their programs to please donors to continue to receive funding. While donor and community priorities can align at times, they often also diverge so that initiatives are not necessarily serving the best interests of the community. Additionally, many organizations mentioned how donors' focus on specific targets and goals often prevent them from carrying out important "process" programs, such as landscape analyses, that are a precondition for and integral to developing future initiatives. Overall, this imbalanced relationship dynamic prevents local knowledge from being leveraged to inform programs and raises questions on who is really in control of development initiatives and who a project is truly serving.

As a Global North donor with a large amount of available funding, CARE is questioning its role in localization and mentioned how locally-led development is not really locally led until local actors hold the funding. Many other donors in addition to CARE are grappling with how much autonomy and resources they are willing to relinquish so that local stakeholders can set the priorities and lead change in their communities. Organizations understand the current aid structure flows from top to bottom. At the top, donors can choose whether to gatekeep knowledge, money, resources, and power or to share and eventually shift power to their partners on the ground.

C. EXTRACTIVE PRACTICES

While organizations are shifting to valuing local knowledge and incorporating it into their practices, they often face an ethical dilemma related to the extractive nature of obtaining knowledge from communities.

Extracting local knowledge not only preserves the power imbalance between organizations and local communities, but also strips local communities of their agency and control over their own experiences and knowledge. One example of extractive practices is when universities publish data gathered from local communities and claim intellectual property rights. Not only does this financially benefit the universities, but it also strips the community's control and ownership over its own data and knowledge. Furthermore, the publications containing the local knowledge are often placed behind paywalls where the community cannot access it. These types of practices erode the relationships between development practitioners and local communities as they violate the trust established to respect the community's autonomy and their ownership over their own knowledge and, as a result, lead to ineffective outcomes for development projects.

Furthermore, extractive practices are an extension of imperialism and colonialism. They are processes of dispossession, and the local knowledge gained ultimately serves the organization, often at the expense of the local community. They reinforce a system where communities are dependent on organizations who hold and gatekeep power and resources. Local knowledge should serve the community; as Rituu Nanda, formerly of The Constellation, said, "Knowledge is not for us, it is for the communities." Finally, organizations stress that learning goes both ways and oftentimes the best solutions are the product of integrating local knowledge with other forms of knowledge.

D. ADDRESSING BIASES

Another important consideration that many development practitioners mentioned during our conversations was addressing biases. Many of the organizations we spoke with recognize they bring their own biases to their work. For example, practitioners may bring negative preconceived notions of the community they are working with that do not align with the reality, which weakens the project's success and can even be harmful to building relationships and trust. Additionally, different aspects of a person's identity, such as gender, race, and socioeconomic background, lead to biases that similarly influence relationship-building and shape project design. Organizations recognize the importance of not only addressing their own biases but also those within the communities with whom they work. Multiple organizations highlighted how development practitioners were generally aware of their biases. In its ALPS plan, ActionAid recognizes the importance of aligning staff attitudes and behaviors with the organization's vision, mission, and values. ActionAid provides space and opportunities for staff members to reflect on and correct their biases. Additionally, to mitigate biases in the field, IFRC emphasized the importance of diverse teams and approaches. It is important that teams are diverse across identities (gender, age, ethnicity, race, etc.) and background (i.e., whether they are from the local community or not) because individuals with different perspectives can better recognize implicit biases in others. Leveraging multiple approaches can triangulate information and help identify strong resonances and discrepancies between data from different sources.

POWER DYNAMICS WITHIN THE LOCAL COMMUNITY

Organizations recognized that power dynamics within local communities can also shape their programs. IFRC explained that while it is important to value and prioritize local knowledge, not everything that local actors say is inherently good or inclusive. Local knowledge is not free from prejudice and does not always align with progress toward equality. There are power structures and social arrangements embedded within communities, meaning local knowledge can also reinforce people's biases and unequal power dynamics at the local level. For example, what one community member suggests may be beneficial for one group in the community might be detrimental to another vulnerable group; or, the powerful groups may perceive the solution as threatening and oppose it. One organization explained that if development practitioners are not aware of the local context, a program can inadvertently support the patriarchy or caste systems. In "Changing Perceptions: Writings on Gender and Development," Mona Mehta wrote about her experiences addressing women's development in Oxfam's West India office. In developing strategies to empower women and address gender inequality, Mehta found that many male local leaders often found these ideas threatening and against their beliefs. The leaders' alternative suggestions often reinforced paternalistic hierarchies and gender roles, and some of them even took the solutions as an opportunity to extend their own individual power. It is for development work to ensure that local knowledge is representative across different groups in a community. Communities are not homogeneous, and neither are their needs.

Organizations employed different approaches for creating safe and representative spaces when capturing local knowledge, beyond just listening to the loudest voices in the room. MCLD uses diverse methods of

facilitation (varying the layout, delivery, etc.), recognizing that sometimes separate spaces are needed for community members to feel comfortable speaking out. Once confidence is built in those separate spaces, it is possible to bring everyone together in a collective space. SWAG mentioned having a similar experience, explaining that sometimes women did not want to talk when men were present in a group. Thus, it was necessary to provide a space only for women where they felt comfortable and safe sharing their perspectives and knowledge.

ActionAid has multiple frameworks in place to address power dynamics within a community, such as their Immersions initiative, Action for Global Justice strategy, Reflection-Action process, Human Rights Based Approach, and ALPS. ActionAid also applies an intersectional lens to its development practices, recognizing that people occupy different identities which require different responses based on their needs. ActionAid also recognizes that different parts of a person's identity can change (and often compound) the nature of the challenges they face. For example, a single mother living with HIV who lives in a rural area requires an HIV-treatment response that takes into account gender norms and inequalities, as well as accessibility to health centers and services. ActionAid's Feminist Research Guidelines also ensure that its research always incorporates gender power relations so that its work is empowering and inclusive.

CHALLENGES

In all our conversations, organizations mentioned how integrating local knowledge into development practices comes with several challenges.

ESTABLISHING THE VALIDITY OF LOCAL KNOWLEDGE IN DEVELOPMENT

As noted in our conversation with Local Knowledge Specialist Sarah Cummings, historically, local knowledge has not been treated with the same validity as scientific evidence within the development community. The Gender and Development Network argues there is a colonial stereotype vested within current institutional norms that associates local knowledge with "backwardness" and "static-ness." Many organizations commented on a visible disregard for local knowledge because it is more qualitative in nature and does not always conform to Western measures of scientific accuracy and objectivity.

In reality, as pointed out by Bhattacharya at TetraTech, local knowledge is really an iterative and dynamic form of knowledge that responds to various factors in the environment and adapts with time. In practice, organizations like World Vision understand that using local knowledge is in fact forward-thinking. They acknowledge that both "scientific" knowledge and local knowledge are necessary in order to be effective, remarking that, "Technical specialists, who often rely heavily on scientific knowledge, must buy-in to a participatory process and work with local groups…using local language to ensure that local knowledge is equally prioritized."

[Célestin Monga](#) argues that the institutional diminishing of local perspectives creates a vicious cycle that entrenches self-doubt, self-hatred, and various sociopolitical ills within local populations that eventually question their own knowledge and policy objectives. He refers to this process of internalization through exclusion as "postcolonialism stress disorder." We found similar observations in multiple conversations of our own, with SWAG remarking, "The word 'local' can have negative connotations in Nigeria, it could sound inferior to global best practices, etc. There are assumptions that come from the term "local" [implying it is not to be considered in development policy]." Thus SWAG uses the term "indigenous knowledge," which resonates more with the communities with whom they work in Nigeria. This example further demonstrates the importance of using language that resonates with local communities and how crucial doing so can be for effective policy-making. Moreover, GIZ mentioned a main challenge they face is that, "People who hold local knowledge don't feel like it's important anymore. They don't feel like they are deserving of an opinion regarding the interventions GIZ will bring."

BALANCING COMMUNITY PRIORITIES AND DONOR REQUIREMENTS

While integrating local knowledge throughout development projects is crucial, it also presents a difficult, costly, and time-consuming process.

For example, the IFRC found it is essential that employees are connected with local knowledge systems and speak the local languages in order to effectively provide aid services. However, IFRC faced constant struggles acquiring funding to train volunteers to expand this capacity. CARE also has encountered similar problems, stating, "Current practice doesn't allow for the collaboration required of locally led programs because it's very time-consuming."

Moreover, World Vision's [Critical Path Engagement](#) method ensures information is gathered from community members at every phase of the development process, from design to evaluation, to foster community engagement at the earliest stage possible. It also requires standardized sectoral indicators to be balanced with metrics important to the community in every project. While World Vision's projects are more time-consuming using this method (with World Vision often spending 10-15 years in a community), it is able to more [effectively](#) address broader issues of social change.

POWER DYNAMICS AND BIASES

Development organizations, especially donors, exist within a well-established power dynamic between local members and their employees. Recognizing the relationship that exists between donors and local organizations is crucial to the effective implementation of development policy. For example, World Vision shared that in their mission of expanding local ownership, even agents that had lived closely in local communities for years were not able to shake off the "World Vision label." This meant that their perspectives were often discounted unless carefully articulated through safe spaces. Kaizen also commented that finding ways to acknowledge these dynamics is crucial to being able to develop safe

spaces, remarking, "You have to make people very comfortable and feel like it's a safe environment [in order to get things done]."

To address the issue, TetraTech currently has a localization practice group in which it is trying to build guiding principles and strategies around localization. TetraTech emphasized the need to ask nuanced and uncomfortable questions, such as, "Who is at the table? Are we just doing this work to look good or are we really making changes? How do we share power? How do we shift the aid system?" They acknowledge that spaces for uncomfortable conversations need to be fostered, and that safe spaces do not mean sanitized spaces, commenting, "If [spaces] are sanitized, then they are merely tokenistic." Many actors may be actively concerned about losing their jobs if they speak out about flaws in the aid system, so proactively dispelling these types of fears is necessary to creating safe and bold spaces.

FUTURE OF DEVELOPMENT

There is a broad consensus that the future of development will include integrating local knowledge into programming and valuing local leadership. Respecting local knowledge will help ensure development projects address the needs of local communities and provide relevant and sustainable solutions. Thus far this report has focused primarily on practitioner organizations and how they are working to better integrate local knowledge and improve their practices, but it is important to acknowledge that local organizations and communities work within parameters set by donor organizations. Thus, we want to reflect on some of the issues that many organizations brought up during our conversations and explore potential ways forward. The future of local knowledge in development will require donors to take a proactive role in modifying their practices and fostering an environment that allows local knowledge to be valued and utilized.

Western donors place high value on efficiency. Often, future funding is contingent on a project making a large impact within a very short time frame; donors want to reach as many people as possible as quickly as possible. This emphasis on efficiency leads to project cycles of only a few years, which does not allow for the integration of local knowledge into programs. Working with local communities is time-intensive; it can take years to build meaningful relationships and understand the needs and complexities of a community. Further, when involving a variety of local actors, there will be more perspectives and it will take longer to find solutions that best help a variety of stakeholders. Donors could assist implementing organizations by establishing more flexible timelines that better reflect the complex process of community participation.

While longer funding horizons are important to sustainable development, many implementing partners have also expressed the desire for development to move away from a project-based model of development and instead embrace longer-term investments in systemic change. Women's empowerment, for example, may not be conducive to a project-based development model as it requires substantial investments in community leadership, capacity strengthening, and time in order to achieve sustainable change. A more holistic development approach will most likely involve numerous variables, to which donors may be reluctant to invest in a malleable process where exact outcomes can be

uncertain. While this hesitancy is understandable, many organizations emphasize that a locally led approach focused on social change rather than discrete projects is more cost-effective, sustainable, and leads to better results, even if it requires a bit more risk initially on the part of the donor.

Additionally, donors could examine the power dynamics inherent in their funding relationships with implementing organizations and local populations. Aid funding is controlled by a few powerful actors, and donors can unintentionally act as gatekeepers that inhibit local stakeholders from accessing knowledge or proposing novel solutions. Donors can work to decentralize this power and divert greater funding to local communities. Only when communities are in control of financial resources will development truly be locally led and will the benefits of local knowledge be fully realized. More immediately, donors can take steps to amplify local voices from outside the West. High-level meetings usually exclude local actors, but donors can use their privileged platform to hear from the communities they seek to help and amplify new voices.

Changing donor practices will be difficult and will require a different measure of success. Quantitative metrics based on Western frameworks may not be able to capture the social change that is possible when communities are empowered to find their own solutions based on their local knowledge. The development community, with donors leading the change, will need to redefine how they measure success and recognize that a change in attitude, a new community practice, or the empowerment of a new local leader is harder to measure than the number of people attending a workshop, but the results may be far more valuable and sustainable. Donors should consider the importance of qualitative results and make funding decisions based on a more nuanced understanding of the potential impact.

Although changing ingrained donor practices will take time and resources, agencies must dedicate themselves to unlearning colonial legacies that regard foreign systems of knowledge as "backward." Until local knowledge systems are internalized as not only valid, but indeed crucial to the effectiveness of development policy, donors will continue to perpetuate an outdated and oppressive system of knowledge collection.

As Christoph Antweiler argues, local knowledge is important to the future of development but it is not a silver bullet. Just as with a scientific approach, there are drawbacks that must be considered and nuanced execution is required. Nevertheless, it was evident from our conversations and literature review that integrating local knowledge into development practices and prioritizing community engagement will lead to more successful and sustainable outcomes.

APPENDIX

LEARNING AGENDA

Guided by USAID's aim to adapt its development assistance to understand how local knowledge is used in development practice, the USAID KMOL function developed a learning agenda to collect information and knowledge from all participating organizations. The learning agenda provided a framework for knowledge synthesis, drawing on insights and lessons learned that can be applicable to the needs of a wide range of stakeholders. The agenda focused on the following key questions:

- Defining Local Knowledge:
  - Is there a taxonomy for all the types—and dimensions—of Local Knowledge (i.e., is there something that exists that is relatively complete)?
  - How are other development organizations defining Local Knowledge? Are there sector-specific definitions (e.g., public health, community forestry, etc.)? Is there any consensus within the development field on definitions of Local Knowledge?
  - What are the implications of these definitions for development practice?
  - How do local communities feel about defining local knowledge?

- Local Knowledge in Practice:
  - How do other organizations approach and use Local Knowledge? (How do they define it, identify/find it, collect it, use it, and when/why do they decide to use Local Knowledge)?
  - Are there any best practices in the wider development community for using Local Knowledge? Any consensus on what to avoid doing?
  - What have been the experiences of other development organizations? (What lessons have been learned on, for example, pitfalls to avoid, or necessary ingredients?)
  - What challenges have organizations encountered when using Local Knowledge?

ORGANIZATIONAL OUTREACH

Through an open call for interviewees on the KM4Dev community of practice, as well as through outreach via team members' professional networks, the team identified representatives from 25 development organizations to interview virtually and also reviewed materials they shared, many of which are linked in this report. The research team interviewed participating organizations and then reviewed the materials they shared.

INTERVIEW PROCESS

The interview process was guided by a questionnaire seeking to address the major areas of interest as defined by the learning agenda and thematic areas of interest. The interviews took the form of discussions of open-ended questions, which allowed for organizations to provide their interpretations of the processes the KMOL function sought to identify. Therefore, the questionnaire below was utilized only to ensure the objectives were addressed in some capacity.

APPENDIX 1:
SAMPLE OF QUESTIONNAIRE EMPLOYED IN THIS ACTIVITY

Defining Local Knowledge

1. How does [your organization] define Local Knowledge, or its equivalent (we recognize that you may call it something different.) Is there an organization-wide definition?
   a. If yes,
      i. What is it? How does it overlap with more "standard" knowledge forms, and how is it distinct?
      ii. How was this definition reached?
      iii. What role did local knowledge holders play in the process of creating your organization's definition?
      iv. Is this definition actually used in practice? / Are there different definitions used in the field vs. the "official" definition?
      v. Does the definition capture different types of local knowledge? –how would you characterize them?
   b. If no,
      i. Is there a reason there is not a definition?
      ii. Does your organization/office/department/team use an agreed-upon definition?
      iii. Are there sector-specific definitions that you use? / Do those definitions capture different types of local knowledge?
2. How does [your organization] identify Local Knowledge stakeholders? How do you engage local knowledge holders?
   a. Are there challenges in identifying what is Local Knowledge and what isn't?
   b. How do you ensure Local Knowledge is used ethically?

Through these interviews, the KMOL function sought to speak with those working or leading initiatives to cultivate and integrate local knowledge within development practices in some capacity. The goal of this effort was to explore how local knowledge is used in development practices, the challenges development organizations face, and the potential for local knowledge integration in the future. To this end, it was imperative that the team interviewed a diverse range of actors, with the participants coming from international financial institutions, humanitarian agencies, and government development organizations.

ORGANIZATIONS INTERVIEWED

The interview process allowed the USAID KMOL function to speak to leading local knowledge and localization experts in the development field, including representatives from the following organizations:

- ActionAid
- Biovision Africa Trust (BvAT)
- CARE International
- Chemonics
- The Centre of Resilient Development (CoRD)
- Catholic Relief Services (CRS)
- Development Assistance Roadmap Portal in the Middle East (DARPE)
- FHI 360
- Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbe (GIZ)
- Global Fund for Children
- Inter-American Development Bank (IDB)
- International Centre for Climate Change and Development (ICCCAD)
- International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC)
- Kaizen
- Movement for Community Led Development (MCLD)
- MINGAnet
- Network for Empowered Aid Response (NEAR)
- Salanga
- Sarah Cummings
- Solidaridad
- Stand with a Girl (SWAG)
- TetraTech International Development
- UN Trust Fund to End Violence Against Women
- World Bank
- World Vision

WEBINAR

To support knowledge-sharing efforts beyond this report, the USAID KMOL function hosted a virtual webinar that featured three of the individuals interviewed for this report as panelists. The webinar provided a space for KMOL practitioners and international development professionals to share and exchange information, practices, and knowledge around local knowledge in development. The team facilitated a panel discussion around the themes and challenges documented in this report and addressed questions and comments from the audience. Overall, the webinar aimed to identify best practices and explore future steps, such as how to build trust with local stakeholders and how donors can better facilitate the use of local knowledge in development. A link to the webinar recording is here.

TABLE 1: LIST OF RESOURCES FROM DEVELOPMENT ORGANIZATIONS

Organization	Links	Descriptions
Solidaridad	Sustainable Livestock Management Improves Livelihoods and Landscapes in Zambia	This article discusses how the landscape in Mazabuka District in Zambia has deteriorated due to poor livestock management practices. The Nambola Livestock projects help to address this problem through teaching farmers holistic management practices.
CARE International	Shifting Power to Local Actors: Why COVID-19 Responses Can't Ignore Gender-based Violence	In a 2021 panel, women throughout Asia discussed the importance of locally led action in addressing gender-based violence, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic. This article highlights the speakers' insights into this issue.
	Shifting Power to Local Actors: Resourcing Local Action	This article discusses the role of money in locally led action and provides insight into how organizations can transform imbalanced power relations.
	In Practice: Supporting Social Movements	In this article, CARE discusses the importance of supporting social movements through supportive and productive relationships.
UN Trust Fund to End Violence Against Women	SHINE	SHINE is an online hub for global knowledge exchange on ending violence against women and girls. SHINE aims to connect a range of partners and changemakers to co-create, collaborate, and amplify knowledge and learning together to end violence against women and girls.
	Evaluation Library	This learning hub is a database of evaluation reports related to the Trust Fund's work. Reports are searchable based on topic, region, and publisher.

Organization	Links	Descriptions
International Centre for Climate Change and Development	[Adapting to Climate Change: Lessons from Bangladesh](#)	This article responds to the recent climate change report released by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. It offers successful examples of how Bangladesh has adapted to climate change, and calls on the world to do so as well.
	[Locally Led Adaptation: We Can Lead the World](#)	This article shares four main lessons from Bangladesh's experience as global leader in locally led adaptations to climate change. These lessons include how to develop a national adaptation plan with a whole-of-society approach; making top-down national plans while also investing in bottom-up inputs from vulnerable communities, including knowledge partners; and designing adaptation investment plans for long-term implementation.
	[Principles for Locally Led Adaptation](#)	This report presents eight principles for locally led adaptation to help guide stakeholders through the challenging route of increasing the business-unusual financing, programming, and policy support needed to build resilient and regenerative societies, economies, and ecosystems.
	[Past, Present, and Future of Locally Led Adaptation](#)	This article presents a brief history of efforts regarding locally led adaptation to climate change.
World Vision	[Good Practices for Putting WV's Development Programmes into Action](#)	This document is a compilation of the good practices from World Vision program teams' work to find new and effective ways of improving child well-being in development programmes. These good practices have emerged from the innovations of teams at the local level.
	[World Vision's Approach to Doing Development Differently and What We Have Learned So Far](#)	This paper shares World Vision's experiences in applying the principles of the Doing Development Differently Manifesto, providing many concrete case studies and examples from World Vision projects all over the world.
ActionAid	[ALPS Framework](#)	ALPS is a framework that sets out the key accountability requirements, guidelines, and processes in ActionAid International, not only in terms of organizational processes for planning, monitoring, strategy formulation, learning, reviews, and audit but also for personal attitudes and behaviors.

Organization	Links	Descriptions
	Immersions in ActionAid	This article focuses on a multi-country initiative, Immersions Program, which aims to bring together development decision-makers (donors, government officials, NGO staff, academics etc.) to learn directly from poor people. ActionAid sees Immersions as one way to influence decision-makers in an environment where the rich and powerful are ever more divorced from the daily realities of the poor.
	Feminist Research Guidelines	This guidance note aims to support ActionAid staff and partners and those interested in how ActionAid does, or commissions, feminist research. It accompanies the ActionAid Research Signature and Strategy and is a set of ideas for conducting feminist research that is rooted in ActionAid's feminist principles and mission and supports ActionAid's change objectives.
	Reflection-Action Tools and Techniques	Reflection-Action is an effort to capture and harmonize the different approaches to transformative practice, including in programming and research, that use participatory tools and processes to challenge and shift power. It contains a range of participatory tools and techniques that can help create an open, democratic environment in which everyone is able to contribute.
	Bargaining for better: Bringing a feminist lens to the Grand Bargain 2.0	Drawing on relevant literature on the Grand Bargain and gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls commitments to date, as well as qualitative survey data with ActionAid's WRO and WLO partners and ActionAid staff in 10 countries, this policy brief provides key recommendations for shaping and implementing the Grand Bargain 2.0 so that it is more effective for women and girls.
	Action for Global Justice in Practice: ActionAid's Human Rights Based Approach	This resource book is designed to be relevant for all ActionAid staff and partners. It aims to help staff and partners design, implement, and monitor local, national, and international rights programs that are aligned with their collectively agreed strategy, a human-rights based approach.
	Powercube for Power Analyses	Powercube is a resource for understanding power relations in efforts to bring about social change. Powercube.net contains practical and conceptual materials to help people think about how to respond to power relations within organizations and in wider social and political spaces.

Organization	Links	Descriptions
Global Fund for Children	SALT Approach	This resource describes the methodology used by the Global Fund for Children to facilitate community ownership through supporting, appreciating, learning, and transferring.
	No More Consultants: We Know More Than We Think	This book describes how the use of consultants can be reduced or redirected to create a more sustainable and valuable impact.
IFRC	Community Knowledge and Awareness Raising	This portal includes resources describing how the IFRC helps communities reduce disaster risk and prepare for emergencies.
	Climate-smart Disaster Risk Reduction Programming Resources	This portal leads to resources and guidance created by the IFRC to help communities reduce climate-related risk.
	Enhanced Vulnerability and Capacity Assessment	The Vulnerability and Capacity Assessment helps analyze the risks communities face and identify ways they can reduce this risk. This assessment is a participatory process that helps communities become more resilient.
	Epidemic and Pandemic Preparedness	This resource includes information about how the IFRC addresses epidemics and pandemics and its strategies for preventing, detecting, and responding to outbreaks.
	Community Health	This portal includes information about the IFRC's community health strategy and the actions it is taking to prevent disease and reduce suffering.
	Community Engagement and Accountability	This resource outlines how the IFRC recognizes and values community members as equal partners.