

LOCALLY LED DEVELOPMENT RESEARCH



GUNJAN VEDA, MOVEMENT FOR COMMUNITY-LED DEVELOPMENT. Community members and the LIFE team applying the Participatory Community Led Development Assessment Tool at World Vision's Bui Area Program in Ethiopia.

ACTIVITY: Localization in Fragile Environments (LIFE)

How and why do locally led development (LLD) approaches lead to impact in fragile environments? To answer this question, LIFE will conduct six theory-based evaluations at various sites in Bangladesh and Ethiopia. LIFE strengthens the capacities of country and global teams, combining participatory evaluation approaches with a realist evaluation lens in order to unpack, test, and refine assumptions about how theories guide change in practice. This will enable teams to think critically about theories that underpin locally led programs and identify what works, for whom, and in what contexts.

ADVANCING LOCALLY LED DEVELOPMENT

Many organizations have seen integrated LLD approaches effectively strengthen the capacity of communities and result in more sustainable outcomes. Yet, to date, there is little understanding of the process of change in fragile environments and why LLD has an impact on resilience, social cohesion, inclusion and governance. Ultimately, LIFE will enhance the ability of USAID and local partners to implement effective, context-responsive, and locally led programming across a spectrum of fragile settings for more sustainable development outcomes.

KEY LEARNING QUESTIONS

- ✧ Which outcomes do key LLD approaches—specifically community-level leadership and facilitation—contribute to?
- ✧ How do key LLD approaches contribute to those outcomes, particularly around increased resilience?
- ✧ How are LLD approaches initiated and implemented in different fragile settings? How does this influence whether they contribute to outcomes?
- ✧ How are LLD approaches sustained in different fragile settings?
- ✧ Why do certain factors impact the effectiveness of LLD approaches in fragile settings and their ability to ultimately contribute to increased resilience capacities (or not)?
- ✧ What are the implications for LLD programming and theories of action and change in fragile settings?

CO-CREATED AS PARTNERS

The LIFE Project is the outcome of a co-creation with USAID, the Movement for Community-Led Development (MCLD) Global Secretariat, The Hunger Project, World Vision, and a research team, led by Dr. Jennifer Leavy and Dr. Catherine Shutt, specializing in participatory theory-based evaluations, and with initial support from Relief International.

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHT:

SETTING A COMMUNITY LED FOUNDATION

LIFE is premised on community-led development (CLD), an approach in which local community members work together to identify goals important to them, develop and implement plans to achieve those goals, and create collaborative relationships both within and outside of their community—all while building on community strengths and local leadership. In early 2023, LIFE conducted trainings on the [Participatory CLD Assessment Tool](#) in Dhaka, Bangladesh and Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. LIFE partners are organizations with a strong focus on community. This training was designed to ensure that the teams had a unified vision of CLD as the foundation of LIFE, putting communities at the center of their evaluations.

PHOTOS: The LIFE team with community members of Bui Area, Ethiopia after piloting the tool (top, Movement for Community-Led Development) and USAID Mission staff in Dhaka, Bangladesh after completing training on the tool together (bottom, The Hunger Project).



ABOUT THE CONSORTIUM

The Movement for Community-Led Development (MCLD) provides leadership for the LIFE activity. MCLD is a global network of 70+ international non-governmental organizations and over 1,500 local civil society organizations. The Hunger Project initiated, funds, and supports the personnel for the MCLD Global Secretariat.

- Three of the six evaluations are conducted by The Hunger Project: two in Bangladesh and one in Ethiopia. The Hunger Project's teams in both countries are composed entirely of national staff, with an overall strategy centered around grassroots training.
- Three of the six evaluations will be conducted by World Vision: two in Ethiopia and one in Bangladesh. World Vision is an active MCLD member and has supported the secretariat in defining CLD, developing CLD assessment tools, and establishing initial CLD evidence.

EXPECTED OUTCOMES

Driven by a "learning by doing" model, LIFE will culminate in::

- ✦ **Strengthened capacity** of partner organizations to utilize participatory approaches and realist-informed evaluations in everyday practice
- ✦ **Synthesized lessons** on community leadership and facilitation in fragile environments drawn from the six theory-based evaluations
- ✦ **Methodologies & tools** that make typically academic approaches participatory and accessible to communities

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