



What is the impact of Community-led Development?

A collaborative meta synthesis research update, Nov 2019



Community-led Development (CLD) is a multi-sectoral, human-centered strategy for collaboration to achieve locally created and owned visions and goals. A developmental approach, it focuses on systemic change to foster stable, resilient, prosperous, inclusive, and self-reliant communities. The Movement for Community-led Development (the Movement), including a global chapter and 11 national chapters, comprises 64 international non-governmental organizations and 100+ local civil society groups, universities, government partners and other stakeholders. In addition to other goals, The Movement's members are committed to producing an evidence base specifically about CLD.

Purpose.

Through a collaborative evidence synthesis, we seek to understand current CLD practices, and the complex relationship between CLD and various development outcomes. This expansive effort encompasses approximately 325 evaluations spanning 50+ countries, submitted by 60 organizations.

The study seeks to answer:

1. Where has community-led development worked and how?
2. What is the theorized impact of CLD on developmental outcomes including self-reliance, resilience, gender equity, sustainability, and citizen's engagement?
3. Is the present lack of evidence on the impact of CLD due to gaps related to theory of change, implementation, measurement, or a combination of all three?
4. Do current evaluation frameworks capture the multi-dimensional impact of CLD? What adapted/emergent frameworks are most congruent with the complexity of CLD?

Research Structure.



SCOPING SUB-GROUP

What is CLD?

- Characteristics of CLD
- Scanning tool
- Landscape of CLD programming



IMPACT SUB-GROUP

What does CLD do?

- Impact of CLD
- Indicators to measure impact



EVALUATION SUB-GROUP

How do we capture CLD impact?

- Quality appraisal tool
- Sampling methodology
- Evaluation methods



ADVISORY GROUP

Practitioner experts

- Scott Guggenheim
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Academic experts

- Kent Glenzer
- Gill Westhorp
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The Study.

This multi-phase research is a collaborative learning-by-doing study. Over 30 Program and Monitoring, Evaluation, Research and Learning professionals from 20 organizations are working with the study lead (on a voluntary basis) to create tools to understand the current practice of CLD through three subgroups: Scoping, Impact, and Evaluation.

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

The next phase of the study will entail a realist synthesis to unpack the “how” of CLD. This will enable us to understand how the different elements of CLD programming interact with various elements of the context to produce the impacts that are visible- be they intended or unintended, positive or negative.

Sub-groups.

Scoping Sub-group

The scoping subgroup has identified 11 characteristics of CLD based on a literature review coupled with consultation and an iterative process of discussion and debate. These characteristics have been used to create a scanning tool that is enabling the group to create a landscape of current CLD practice based on 300+ evaluation reports from 50+ countries. This tool will also enable organizations to understand where their programs are in their journey of CLD and what more can be done to strengthen them. The beta version of this tool is now available for feedback.

Impact Sub-group

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

Evaluation Sub-group

The Evaluation Sub-group ensures the rigor of the study methodology. After a survey of various available tools and instruments, it has simplified and adapted a USAID tool on the quality of program evaluations in the education sector. This quality appraisal tool comprises of two kinds of questions- one that deal with the general quality of evaluation (be they qualitative, quantitative or mixed methods) and the other, that looks specifically at the characteristics of evaluation for a CLD program. This tool is currently being applied to the 300+ evaluation reports that were submitted for this study and will be used to determine a robust and methodologically rigorous sample for the deep dive. Going forward, the Evaluation Sub-group will examine the various evaluation methodologies currently being used and seek to adapt them to the complexity of CLD.

About the Meta-synthesis.

The meta-synthesis is a multi-year phased initiative that will drive a better understanding of the implementation and impact of CLD at the household, population and systems level, in various contexts. It will also lead to a peer-reviewed co-creation of evaluation frameworks that capture the contributory impact of CLD. In the first phase of this research, we are plotting the current practice of CLD through a review of the 300+ programs that have been self-reported as CLD. This will generate a broad understanding of the nature of CLD programming and its impact and provide rich insights for program design through a series of tools and guidelines that will be available by April 2020.

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

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

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

Excerpt from Scanning Tool

Join.

To join the meta-synthesis effort or for further information on the study, the tools that have been developed and the next phase of our research, write to gunjan.veda@thp.org

About the Movement.

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

