



How Missions are Incorporating Collaborating, Learning and Adapting into their CDCSes

What is collaborating, learning and adapting (CLA)?

Learning & Adapting is at the heart of the Program Cycle, tying strategy to project design, implementation, and monitoring & evaluation. A collaborating, learning and adapting plan is optional but encouraged, and can make Mission programs more adaptive and contextually relevant, more firmly grounded in evidence, and more effective and sustainable.

- **C—Collaborate:** Work with others where it makes sense to avoid duplication of efforts and outdated practice, increase synergy, and share knowledge about what works and what doesn't.
- **L—Learn:** Draw on evidence and experience to develop strategies and design programs that are grounded in good practice and tailored to the local context.
- **A—Adapt:** Make iterative course corrections while we implement to maintain the relevance and accelerate the effectiveness of our assistance.

How to incorporate a strong CLA approach into your CDCS:

- Include a broad explanation and specific examples of how the mission can achieve sustainable development outcomes more effectively by collaborating strategically, learning continuously and adapting iteratively.
- Identify priority CLA activities relating to critical opportunities and challenges, and describe them throughout the document as well as in a separate annex on CLA.
- Outline roles, responsibilities and resources needed to operationalize the CLA plan.
- Discuss the status of other enabling conditions that need to be in place in order to operationalize the CLA plan.

Missions with strong CLA components in their CDCSes: Missions with CLA/learning components in their draft or approved CDCSes include Uganda, Rwanda, Liberia, Zimbabwe, Bangladesh and Guatemala, with Mozambique, Nigeria and others in development. Each mission has different needs and will therefore integrate CLA approaches into their processes in the manner that best meets those needs. Below are selected highlights from four missions that are leading in this effort. Here are a few highlights from four missions; additional missions will be added as they complete their Learning plans.

- 1) Rwanda:** Has a robust approach that embeds CLA activities throughout DO programs, mission processes and strategic engagement with stakeholders; includes a research agenda, institutes a new knowledge continuity process, and staffs the CLA lead role as well as identifying CLA roles for all staff throughout the mission.
- 2) Liberia:** Has hired a CLA Advisor, and is focusing on monitoring game-changing political/security developments, and on building capacity, both internally within the mission and with government counterparts.
- 3) Zimbabwe:** Includes refining a strongly adaptive approach in one DO for extending across the others and sharing lessons learned; leveraging a strong donor coordination culture borne of the prohibition on most direct work with the GOZ; piloting some science & technology innovations; and tracking key

political game changers to plan for adapting the program following the constitutional referendum and election.

- 4) **Uganda:** Has hired a CLA Advisor, is procuring a CLA mechanism, instituted a mission-wide community of practice, issued a Mission Order on integrating learning into projects and activities, and is implementing a strong multi-stakeholder collaboration through its pilot District Operational Plans.

Rwanda

Already achieved:

- Created a collaboration map for each DO to visualize key relationships. These serve as planning tools and baselines for annual review and adaptation and to help them program their influence strategically.
- Planned for and prioritized key participation in joint sector reviews
- Instituting mission-wide innovation awards
- Shaped portfolio reviews to focus on higher-order questions about strategy and development hypotheses, and to consider adaptations that are implied by new learning or changing conditions.

New processes planned:

- Institutionalizing cross-DO ownership of three cross-cutting “lenses” that will help them achieve their goal through discussions and shared programming decisions.
- Leading interagency thematic discussions to share technical and contextual knowledge
- Revising the Mission Order on Project Design to incorporate CLA
- Identifying a DO-by-DO research agenda that addresses key outstanding questions
- Instituting exit interviews of departing staff and with IPs at close-out for knowledge continuity and tacit knowledge transfer
- Working with S&T to create GIS maps, shared with key stakeholders, to spatially locate USAID and other development activities in relation to one another to support coordination and collaboration.

Resources dedicated to support CLA:

- Mission has already begun a Mission Management Assessment to better understand how the Mission should be staffed, organized, and managed in order to achieve the goals outlined in the CDCS
- Mission staff members (program office staff, CDCS POC, technical teams) have been identified to lead particular aspects of CLA; all staff will play a role
- Cross-mission knowledge exchange (virtually and via regional TDYs) will be planned

Liberia

Already achieved:

- Established a two-track plan for building mission, GOL and IP capacity, as well as pursuing development results. This includes within the capacity building track an emphasis on skills relating to collaborating, learning and adapting. Identified two main game changers and noted a third, and established key indicators for tracking the game changers.

New processes planned:

- Analytic agenda to plug knowledge gaps, firm evidentiary basis for CDCS and test development hypotheses.
- Plan for an annual “big picture” reflection with IPs and GOL counterparts, as well as systematic knowledge sharing among other donors working in relevant areas..
- Robust agenda for monitoring not only program performance but also context, risks, game changers, public perception, and activities undertaken by other development actors. Plan to engage the Embassy’s pol/econ officers in monitoring their game changer indicators, in addition to getting help from USAID/W and State to conduct special assessments if emerging conditions requires.
- Strategic collaboration and knowledge sharing internally across DO teams, as well as with other missions facing similar challenges.

Strengthening processes for analyzing evaluation findings for programmatic implications and adapting programs accordingly.

Resources dedicated to support CLA:

- Hired both an M&E Advisor and a CLA Advisor; expect to devote 5% of program budget to M&E and CLA activities.

Zimbabwe

Already achieved:

- Responded to restrictions on GOZ engagement with highly synthesized and collaborative interaction with donors and partners resulting in information and resource sharing and leveraging.
- Established a plan for testing some science & technology innovations, including a cheap and quick test for TB and drug resistance, and social media techniques for increasing voter awareness and participation in the upcoming election. Will capture and share lessons learned.
- Identified and analyzed the key game changer: Zimbabwe’s political situation and the upcoming constitutional referendum and presidential election.

New processes planned:

- Testing and iteratively refining adaptive management model (initiated with OTI) through DRG DO program, and will eventually extend it to the rest of the Mission program, and will share lessons learned with other missions via ProgramNet and Learning Lab.
- A DO2 FFP solicitation will include a research component and an annual learning summit for partners to share lessons learned.
- Portfolio Reviews and partners’ meetings and will be structured to address higher-level questions of the soundness of the program’s evidence base, and reflection to plan for adapting. A new mentoring program will build from existing peer support practices, will include coaching around collaborating and continuous learning, will leverage site visits and mission exchanges, and will be considered as a means for providing FSN-led orientation to incoming American staff.
- The Mission will review approaches and tools used by other Missions in their CLA agendas, and assess them for their useful application in the USAID/Zimbabwe program. These include collaboration mapping, influence planning, After-Action Reviews and the use of advisory groups to ground-test Mission initiatives.

Resources dedicated to support CLA:

The Mission is considering this issue.

Uganda

Already achieved:

- Formed a Mission-wide Community of Practice (COP) to coordinate CLA efforts, and build staff interest
- Held three large-scale CLA exercises with implementing partners—one to examine how game changers in Uganda affect program implementation, another “big picture reflection” on successful practices in local governance and a third on District Operational Plans..
- Have held periodic/iterative consultations and collective analyses with various stakeholders to compare expected outcomes against observations.
- Revised Mission Order on Project design to have teams create more rigorous development hypotheses and evaluation plans, and include CLA questions.
- Have identified critical “game changers” and associated indicators to track shifts that signal the need to adjust strategy or program direction.

New processes planned:

- Working to map the activities of USG and stakeholders in USG development assistance and establish a central repository of relevant information; use GIS technology to overlay key data sets on agriculture, health, etc.
- Piloting “District Operational Plans” to bring together all USAID implementing partners and district government officials to improve coordination, troubleshoot operational issues, align interventions to district development plans, and gradually empower Ugandan officials’ to take increasing responsibility for enhancing donor and development assistance.
- Planning to increase tacit knowledge exchange and strategic and program continuity through a robust capture-and-convey process, led by FSNs, to include recording exit interviews with departing USG staff and implementing partners, and conducting intensive intake briefings with arriving staff and partners to ensure that country, agency and program history and context are captured and shared.
- Seeking to create a culture among USAID program and project managers, implementers and stakeholders that is conducive to learning, in which incentives are aligned with learning objectives and people are rewarded for approaching challenges by working together to analyze them candidly and seeking to develop stronger staff capacities and perspectives to solve problems.

Resources dedicated to support CLA:

- Procuring a [new instrument](#) to combine traditional M&E activities with CLA activities to assist the Mission in implementing CLA analyses and processes.
- Hired a CLA Advisor as a full-time position to coordinate all CLA efforts.

NOTE: As they become available, CLA annexes from CDCSes will be posted on [ProgramNet Learning & Adapting](#) section.

The Draft [Program Cycle Learning Guide](#) provides helpful models, methods, tools and approaches for integrating collaborating, learning and adapting throughout the Program Cycle, as well as links to many more resources on the Program Cycle [Learning Lab](#) and elsewhere.