

Learning has always been a part of USAID's work. USAID staff and implementing partners have always sought ways to better understand the development process and USAID's contribution to it, to share the successes and lessons of USAID's initiatives, and to institute improvements to our programs and operations. Learning is always taking place, but it is not generally systematically planned or adequately resourced, nor is it always facilitated or acted on in ways that are strategic and can maximize results.

Through policy, tools, and technical assistance, USAID's Bureau for Policy, Planning, and Learning promotes planning, implementing, and assessment practices designed to improve development results. A key element of this program cycle is the integration of collaborating, learning, and adapting (CLA) throughout program cycle processes. This integration of CLA aims to:

- improve the quality and relevance of USAID's development programs by grounding them in evidence
- make programs adaptive to new learning and changing contexts
- extend USAID's influence through sharing knowledge and collaborating with other development actors
- catalyze learning among country development actors to build capacity and facilitate country-led development

CLA THROUGHOUT THE PROGRAM CYCLE

[C] Collaborating intentionally happens when USAID staff and stakeholders identify areas of shared interest and work together where it makes sense, reduce duplication of efforts, and share knowledge across sectoral and institutional boundaries.

[L] Learning systematically takes place when USAID and stakeholders utilize performance monitoring data, take time to pause and reflect on implementation, and review and synthesize relevant assessments and evaluations. This helps the Agency draw on evidence and experience from many sources to share what works and what doesn't, and employ participatory development methodologies that catalyze learning for stakeholders.

[A] Adapting effectively happens when USAID and partners apply learning and make iterative course corrections during implementation to increase the impact of development assistance.

USAID's ADS 200 defines learning as:

A continuous process of analyzing a wide variety of information sources and knowledge (including evaluation findings, monitoring data, innovations, and new learning that informs USAID staff and partners about promising practices, questions about received wisdom, collected observations, and tacit knowledge from those who have particularly deep or unique insight in a given area) in order to facilitate iterative adaptation of strategy, project design, and/or implementation, for more effective and efficient achievement of development objectives.



CLA SNAPSHOTS

Based on Mission priorities, partner capacity, country contexts and other factors, Missions have developed a wide range of methods to strengthen their programs and operations by strengthening CLA practices. CLA will always need to be customized to its context to enable the adaptation of USAID programming. To date, more than 30 missions have adopted intentional CLA approaches. Here are some examples of what CLA can look like.

GUATEMALA

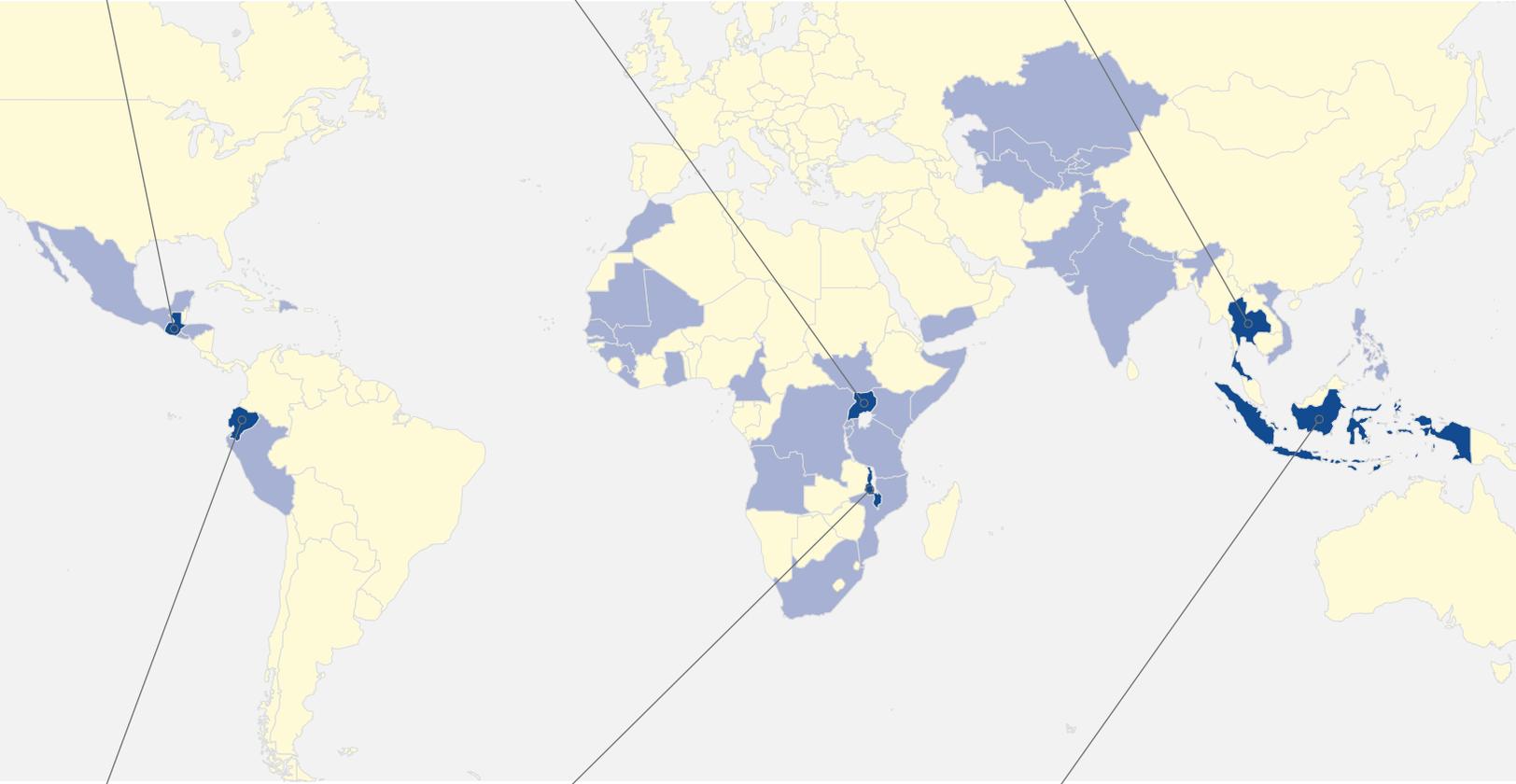
Through the Western Highlands Integrated Program (WHIP), USAID/Guatemala is working to reduce poverty and chronic malnutrition through systematic collaboration among mission technical offices, with government entities at the central and local levels, and with implementing partners.

UGANDA

Community Connector (CC) is a Feed the Future program designed to place learning and adapting in the foreground. CC has multiple and systematic feedback loops for continuous learning at multiple levels. These include community field days, monthly visits to community-based volunteers from sub-county CC and local government staff, monthly regional meetings with sub-county staff, and quarterly meetings with national partners and stakeholders. Feedback sessions focus on frank and open sharing and listening, recognizing that learning from failures offers the greatest opportunities to improve.

USAID'S REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT MISSION FOR ASIA (RDMA)

RDMA has taken a team approach to support and operationalize CLA throughout the region. With representatives from across the mission, the team facilitates such activities as After Action Reviews and TEDx type events. All RDMA Mission staff are a part of the learning team and are essential to the success of incorporating CLA throughout the Program Cycle.



ECUADOR

During close out, USAID/Ecuador captured valuable knowledge lessons learned from the economic growth, democracy and governance, and environment sectors to continue to further development impacts in the country and the region. The mission developed online portals to house technical documents, digital stories, and project information and reports as a way to ensure that USAID's investment in these sectors in Ecuador live beyond the life of the mission.

MALAWI

USAID/Malawi implements according to its "co-location, coordination and collaboration" framework, clustering its efforts in selected geographic areas. Partners coordinate in work planning, attend partner meetings convened by USAID to discuss how to better collaborate, and leverage each other's activities for greater impact. One example is leveraging early childhood reading initiatives for malaria prevention—young students are improving their reading skills by reading about how to prevent malaria.

INDONESIA

USAID/Indonesia designed the South-South Triangular Cooperation project collaboratively with the government. Adapting approaches based on the mission's technical and sectoral expertise and lessons from other projects, USAID and the government are working together to enable Indonesia to be a donor to other countries.

LEARNING RESOURCES

PPL supports two online platforms to share tools and models and to facilitate learning opportunities, peer engagement and collaboration among USAID staff and partners across the globe.

Together, USAID Learning Lab and ProgramNet (an internal site) support USAID staff and partners by providing a space for knowledge sharing on how to operationalize CLA through:

- A curated resource library of guidance, tools, case studies, videos, webinar recordings, and other documentation on effective learning approaches and promising CLA practices
- Program Cycle guidance and a related Learning Guide for missions and implementing partners
- Open and closed collaboration spaces to provide opportunities to connect virtually with internal and external colleagues to address topics related to CLA
- Support to and highlights from USAID working groups focused on learning-related topics, such as the Evaluation Interest Group and KM Reference Group

LEARNING SUPPORT

Building on existing CLA practices found throughout the Agency, USAID seeks to institutionalize CLA so that it becomes embedded in existing work processes and operational culture. Support to USAID missions includes:

ASSESSING MISSIONS' CURRENT CLA CAPACITY. This is a facilitated self-assessment process for missions to better understand CLA in practice—identifying their current practices and approaches, such as portfolio reviews, and ways to enhance them to strengthen CLA in their mission.

DEVELOPING CLA PLANS. This participatory process is based on assessment results, to develop a CLA action plan that meets the mission's specific needs and outlines how the mission will further institutionalize CLA.

PROVIDING TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE AND ONGOING SUPPORT. As missions develop action plans tailored to their CLA needs, USAID can provide assistance and ongoing support in implementing those plans.

CONNECTING MISSIONS. Working closely with several regional missions, to build their capacity to support

CLA within and among bilateral missions and programs in their regions.

CONNECTING PARTNERS. Increasing opportunities for USAID implementing partners to connect around CLA include in-person events, virtual collaboration, and recognition of innovative CLA efforts.



USAID LEARNING LAB

Who Can Use It? USAID staff, its implementing partners, and the broader international development and knowledge management communities.

What Can You Do? USAID Learning Lab is a collaborative platform where USAID staff and partners work together to share and refine CLA approaches, engage with experts, and learn how members of the development community maximize their impact through knowledge exchange and learning. Visit usaidlearninglab.org to learn more.

PROGRAMNET

Who Can Use It? USAID staff. It is a platform for sharing knowledge and promoting learning on implementing the Program Cycle.

What Can You Do? Access practical tools, events, and examples of Mission products from each phase of the Program Cycle. You can also engage in peer-to-peer and mission-to-USAID/Washington dialogue to support collaboration and facilitate adaptive implementation. Visit programnet.usaid.gov to learn more.

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