2022 CLA CASE COMPETITION

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**Case Title:**

# Using CLA for timely Social Behavior Change Communication adaptation in Uganda


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A Voice Of Muhabura Radio presenter in Kisoro district, Uganda engages in discussion (before Lunch time news) about the USAID ICAN "We Can Do 5" priority behaviors.
Credit: USAID ICAN


## Summary:

The success of the USAID's Integrated Community Agriculture and Nutrition (USAID ICAN) Activity has largely been determined by its ability to adapt to changing contextual factors and continuous learning and improvement. ICAN is USAID's flagship resilience Activity, working to increase economic opportunities, improve nutrition, and strengthen participation in community and local governance. The Activity is targeting 116,000 vulnerable households, 184,000 mothers, and 23,000 adolescents in select districts within Kigezi, Acholi, and Karamoja sub-regions with high poverty levels, malnutrition, and vulnerability to disasters. The five-year Activity is working through existing community structures such as Business Service Providers (BSPs), Village Health Teams (VHTs), and Governance Champions that are agents of behavior change within the communities and spearhead community commitment to agreed resilience actions. USAID ICAN's key highlight activity is community-led dialogues where key contentious issues and decisions around community shocks are discussed. This tailored Social and Behavior Change (SBC) Strategy enable communities to take up key resilience-building priority behaviors.
During the COVID-19 pandemic, the Activity increased the use of radio as a safe option to reach communities. However, the Activity's CLA led annual survey ascertained business service providers (BSP) (29%) more than any other source as communities' information sources, with a smaller citing of radios (12%). This was going to pose a challenge as radio use was highly recommended. Therefore, to better understand this self-reported divergence and make effective decisions, the Activity conducted a radio pulse check. The findings delivered key programming adaptations for behavior change towards resilience. The Activity will continue to conduct regular pulse-checks for beneficiary community input and use the learnings to adapt interventions accordingly.


**Which two subcomponents of the Collaborating, Learning & Adapting (CLA) Framework are most reflected in your case? Please reference them in your submission.**

- Internal Collaboration
- External Collaboration
- Technical Evidence Base
- Theories of Change
- Scenario Planning
- M&E for Learning
- Pause & Reflect
- Adaptive Management
- Openness
- Relationships & Networks
- Continuous Learning & Improvement
- Knowledge Management
- Institutional Memory
- Decision-Making
- Mission Resources
- CLA in Implementing Mechanisms

## 1. WHAT: What is the general context in which the case takes place? What organizational or development challenge(s) prompted you to collaborate, learn, and/or adapt?

Historically, the USAID ICAN's three target sub-regions—Kigezi, Acholi, and Karamoja—experience some of the worst levels of vulnerability in Uganda. Specifics vary by region; however, the households have difficulty accessing capital and markets, and lack social capital and the ability to advocate for their needs with local government structures. They also face high levels of malnutrition e.g., Karamoja has one of the highest percentages of wasted children (10%) and highest percentile of underweight children (26%). Also, primary school education is the right of every Ugandan girl and boy but chronic understaffing plagues schools. The 2013 national student-teacher ratio was 46:1 with the reality in USAID ICAN districts being worse. Breakdown in community relationships with local governments exacerbate these challenges, resulting in the citizenry not participating effectively in planning and budgeting for their priorities.

USAID ICAN optimistically implements a locally tailored Social and Behavior Change (SBC) Strategy that enables communities take up key resilience-building priority behaviors called the "We Can Do 5" using community-based radio dialogues as a major media channel. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic restrictions, the Activity had to increase the use of radios as one of the safe options to reach communities. However, the Activity's M&E for Learning led annual survey highlighted that most beneficiaries receive their information from Business Service Providers (29%), and community health workers (18%) with only some citing radios (12%). To better understand this self-reported divergence and make a better decision on how to utilize radio in the wake of the pandemic, a radio pulse check was conducted to ascertain the role of radio in SBC communication among beneficiaries and how this medium interacts with other community communication media. The findings led to adaptations for USAID ICAN, radio station managers, and local governments for effective community engagement and resilience actions.

## 2. WHY: Why did you decide to use a CLA approach? Why was CLA considered helpful for addressing your organizational or development challenge(s)?

USAID ICAN is, at its core, a resilience Activity—one underpinned by multi-sectoral development goals that demanded that we adopt a collaborative approach for successful implementation. USAID ICAN uses a human centered CLA approach to respond to target groups' needs. With the COVID-19 restrictions in place for social gatherings, the CLA led Radio Pulse Check provided an avenue for feedback from the communities, effective decision making, and adaptive management by the Activity and key stakeholders on the Community's preferred medium of communication.

USAID ICAN uses CLA to assess the effectiveness of the various resilience capacities. For instance, a rich array of feedback loops was developed to process data, review progress, and allow for decision making that is built on both external and internal collaboration. For example, through this Radio Pulse Check, consultations ascertained that; communities preferred a combination of radio with community meetings organized by their leaders, men had greater access to radios than women and radio listener-ship peak times varied in the different Activity supported sub-regions. This information was a source of adaptation measures for the Activity's implementation during the pandemic.

USAID ICAN has intentionally resourced CLA approaches with a team that monitors resilience building and has established a culture of internal collaboration (among the staff) and external collaboration with partners and stakeholders. The Activity works under the premise that communities that undertake resilience activities need methods for monitoring their commitments

**3. How: Tell us the story of how you used a collaborating, learning and/or adapting approach to address the organizational or development challenge described in Question 2.**

Our approach is grounded on continuous learning and improvement & the culture of relationships and networking. Subsequently, the Activity used its decision-making processes to enable its adaptive management.

Relationships and Network: One of USAID ICAN's key highlight activities is community dialogues that are led by community leaders where key contentious issues around community resilience are discussed, and community-led decisions made. However, during the COVID-19 pandemic, the Activity increased the use of radio as a safe option to reach communities. The plan was for community members engage in discussion and share perspectives and the radio presenters (DJs) in collaboration with USAID ICAN and district technical personnel share resilience messages around key topics.

M&E for Learning: To ascertain the effectiveness of interventions (such as the use of radio), the Activity conducts an annual beneficiary survey to measure outcomes and track trends. This enables continuous learning and improvement, better planning, optimal utilization of resources, and informed decision making on activities to scale up or revise. With this in hindsight, in October 2020, the Activity conducted its annual Monitoring and Evaluation for Learning Beneficiary annual survey to deduct the effects and experiences of the Covid-19 pandemic on the beneficiary communities and inform programming in the wake of the pandemic (in this case inform the transition from community dialogues to radio dialogues). The survey ascertained sources of information for the communities as business service providers (BSP) (29%) more than any other source. Few people noted radio (12%) or other respected sources such as community health workers (18%) and leaders (5%). This was going to pose a challenge if radio dialogues were being tagged to be implemented and yet radios were not the communities' priority source of information. To better understand the discrepancy between beneficiary's self-reporting on their sources of information and media surveys and inform program changes, a rapid radio pulse check was conducted to determine the role of radio in SBC communication among beneficiaries, how this medium interacts with other community communication media and why community dialogues were overall preferred over radio dialogues.
Formal feedback loop mechanisms regularly generate explicit evidence through structured data and information collection: The Radio Pulse Check consultations were held with local leaders, community members, and community change agents (BSPs, VHTs, and teachers). The findings indicated that within the communities, community meetings first and then radio were trusted sources of information. Radios were enlisted as a trusted information source, but men more than women owned radios. The peak time for programming happened in the morning when women were in the gardens or evening when they are preparing meals. These respondents were further engaged in making recommendations for USAID ICAN Activity, Radio Managers, and the local leaders. Participants recommended: i) radio use and suggested that their leaders and change agents mobilize them to listen at the right times ii) reinforcement of content through multiple channels, iii) giving radios to homesteads so women can have access iv) Preferred radio programs for placement of messages v) Radio station managers and presenters to effectively coordinate with partners for messaging and vi) Radio stations gave mandate and resources to select participants.

Adaptive Management: The Activity's Management made informed adaptations such as: proactively informing community leaders in advance about radio program times and topics, engaging community members and community leaders through radio programs in addition to working with community leaders to enable people to call in, radio airing times and precise content. Partnerships were further opened with regional radio stations and community connections for radio programming, deepened. The Activity will continue to conduct pulse checks for community input and improvement on activity implementation.

**4. ORGANIZATIONAL IMPACT: How has collaborating, learning and adapting affected your team and/or organization? If it's too early to tell, what effects do you expect to see in the future?**

The USAID ICAN Activity could have easily invested resources in activities that were not going to harness results or cause communities to continue to engage had it not been for the CLA led Radio Pulse Check. This activity first and foremost created a sense of empowerment amongst the USAID ICAN Activity staff and implementing partners because of the power of information that was in their hands. Secondly, the staff and partners' leadership skills were enhanced by the feedback mechanism the CLA approaches provided. The use of a facilitative human-centered approach to inform programming, built confidence in the knowledge that communities were receiving support in something they would sustain and believe in. Furthermore, the feedback loop between the Activity, the community structures, and the local leadership has been strengthened from these engagements.
The openness to learning and change (adaptation) created a sense of togetherness within the USAID ICAN Activity staff and partners – with a continued to pledge to keep integrating such monitoring and evaluation for learning approaches before critical decisions are made.

With USAID ICAN Activity in Uganda being USAID's flagship resilience Activity and with the shock that Covid-19 presented to implementation of community dialogues – the sense of "resilience" and how to attain this was realized when the Activity learned and adapted accordingly as informed by the Radio Pulse check.

**5. DEVELOPMENT IMPACT: How has using a CLA approach contributed to your development outcomes? What evidence can you provide? If it's too early to tell, what effects do you expect to see in the future?**

With the Covid-19 restrictions on community gatherings being lifted, radio dialogues remained one of USAID ICAN Activity's key interventions that present a high reach with lower spending. The communities continue to listen in to the well-tailored messages and even call in to engage in discussion.
It is prudent to highlight that, contextualized studies create more impact and create an environment for sustainability. The radio pulse check being a human-centered learning approach alluded to communities' use of radio but further alluded to them believing more in their local leaders and all the other recommendations given. USAID ICAN Activity adapted and implemented using recommendations and has since harvested outcomes such as increased listenership, engagement of women in dialoguing alongside their male counterparts, more involvement of local leaders in radio programming and campaigns etc.

**6. ENABLING CONDITIONS: How have enabling conditions - resources (time/money/staff), organizational culture, or business/work processes - influenced your results? How would you advise others to navigate any challenges you may have faced?**

One of USAID ICAN Activity's unique positioning factors – as a resilience Activity – is hinged on its Collaborating and Learning Agenda (CLA) which culminates from the Activity's design and theory of change which encourage adaptation and learning. This means there is buy-in from the leadership for CLA that is at the helm of implementation.

USAID ICAN Activity staff and partners (through the CLA Lead) have a designated schedule where for two hours of one day in a month select individuals share on different topics for activity ownership, enhanced knowledge, and sometimes real-time decision making. The Activity has been further integrated as part of its design learning questions in the USAID Activity Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning Plan (AMELP), a strategic planning and performance monitoring and evaluation tool. This provides CLA enabling environment for the Activity.

For the Radio Pulse Check, the Activity – through already earmarked resources – ably conducted these consultations and will be able to conduct consultations as such when the need arises.

Challenges have come in form of the Covid-19 pandemic restrictions that inhibited movement to conduct studies. The process of adapting to a somewhat new way of implementing activities presented a time and resource burden as it was a long process. Ensuring all stakeholders were brought on board, designing, and implementing the survey, and reporting and then implementing the adaptations took longer than a year, and yet results had to be reported upon.

One of USAID ICAN Activity's regions of implementation has been undergoing insecurity challenges in form of cattle rustling. This hindered and continues to hinder learning activities – as the communities' priorities are on keeping safe and protecting their animals. The district leadership and even the radio stations were and continue to focus a lot more on messaging around security in the region, conflicting with the Activity's intended work.