Bite-Sized Learning: Alphabet Soup for the Soul: CLA and DEIA - Q&A Session
Session on 2/28/2024

This document contains a transcription of the Q&A session that took place during Session 2 of USAID's 2023-2024 Bite-Sized Learning Series: "Alphabet Soup for the Soul: CLA and DEIA". For more information related to the session, and to the Bite-Sized Learning series overall, [visit Learning Lab](#).

Does USAID have any written guidance and templates on how, in what format, and how often USAID projects should report their CLA and learning agendas? *Additionally, should these be integrated into quarterly and annual narratives, or separate reports? Are USAID Missions responsible for offering this guidance, or is there a unique standard around CLA reporting that implementing partners are expected to follow?*

Heather Risley (Session Host, Senior Learning Specialist at USAID): This is a really great question. When you are implementing your activity, the best way to think about including CLA (and reporting on CLA) is to integrate it as part of your AMELP (your activity monitoring, evaluation and learning plan). In fact, we recommend that you start your AMELP by thinking about your learning questions. What is it that you need to know in order to check progress on your project? Additionally, what is it that you need to know to check assumptions about the theory of change you have established? From there, think through what kinds of indicators, potential evaluations, or other research and monitoring mechanisms you need to have in place to begin to answer those questions. That is the base upon which you can think about how CLA is integrated in your activity implementation.

Additionally, be sure to include CLA as part of your work plan. Think of those enabling conditions for which you have to account. How can you make sure that they are included in the types of meetings you are going to have, the way you integrate and resource for pause and reflect, etc. Then, of course, CLA can show up in any sort of quarterly or annual reports. You can certainly reflect back the progress that you're making on those more strategic documents.

Ultimately, there's no other standard for CLA reporting ([here's a template for inspiration](#)).

Did you have any budget allocated for CLA Processes?

Juan Barco (Deputy Chief of Party, USAID/Colombia Migration Management Activity, Chemonics International): Yes. We have an excellent team, and we spend time getting to know the CLA tools and pathways we hope to employ, and introducing them to the team. We also tell our stakeholders about these tools. We spend a lot of time talking with different stakeholders. We have a budget to spend on workshops with communities, with local officials. But it is not a big budget. It is a

normal budget to spend across different activities. My recommendation is that it is not the budget that is most important, but rather the capacity of the team to understand and incorporate new tools to implement during the processes during the project.

Heather: Thanks, Juan. What I'm hearing is that you do not have a separate, "this is our CLA budget over here" situation. Rather, the actual resourcing for CLA was integrated through the nature of the activities and the various components of the work that you were doing. Is that an accurate representation?

Juan: Yeah, that's right. We introduced the CLA approach into our technical activities. That is the best way to enhance our CLA approach.

Heather: Thanks, Juan! Rabecca, how did that look in your activity, in terms of how you budgeted and allocated resources for CLA?

Rabecca Banda (Program Coordinator, Monitoring and Evaluation, Grassroots Soccer Zambia): Thank you so much. In our case, this is part of the routine activities that we do in our organization. So, yes, we have the budget for monitoring, evaluation, and learning. Learning is the culture that is promoted within Grassroots Soccer, so it is budgeted for.

Heather: I see. You're focused on the monitoring, evaluation and learning plan, and making sure that CLA is integrated through that work, and that the appropriate resources are allocated there. That's great! In fact, from a broader CLA perspective here at USAID, this is what we are seeing as well. A sort of integrated approach for CLA is implied when we're talking about budget. So, it isn't that there is a separate "here's where CLA is, and this is what money we can dedicate to CLA." Rather, CLA is actually integrated with the whole approach. Great to hear that this has been your experience, Rabecca and Juan!

How did you ensure the inclusion of Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility for your CLA story, especially for adolescents?

Rabecca: As an organization, Grassroots Soccer really focuses on improving the well-being of adolescents and young people. To that end, as an organization, we make sure that the information staff have also trickles down to the adolescents and young people, including the peer educators. This whole process, which allows everyone to understand matters at the same level in the organization, is key. For adolescents, we make sure that once our staff receive the diversity, equity, and inclusion training, it is cascaded to the peer educators, and through the peer educators, that it also goes straight to the

adolescents and young people. This way, everybody has the same information when it comes to diversity, equity and inclusion. We don't want to leave anyone behind. We want to include everybody.

What is the result? We go to the peer educators, and make sure they're given the [DEIA] information. Then, because the peer educators are the ones who interact every time with adolescents and young people, we make sure that we maintain strong relationships with them. We play a supervisory role, making sure that the adolescents and young people also understand the issues of diversity, inclusion and also equity. So, they are part of the process. Whenever we are doing any activities, we make sure that from the staff to the educator to the adolescent, who is a beneficiary in the field we all have the same information. This lets us promote DEIA strongly among young people and adolescents.

How do you sustain CLA within an organization beyond the life of a project?

Juan: We use different CLA approaches. There are many CLA tools. During the project we implement the Pause and Reflect exercise. We engage different stakeholders to use those tools we implement, and use different exercises to maintain the people involved in different processes. I think that we can use different steps to involve the communities and local organizations in this process, and then simply transfer the tools. That is a way to implement and maintain retention in the CLA processes.

Heather: Thanks, Juan. In terms of the organizations that you are working with, do you feel like you've noticed anything shift within the cultures within those organizations as a result of the USAID funded work that's happening there? I ask because I would argue that, once you start to see signs of culture shift, CLA becomes more sustainable, and you start to see results over time.

Juan: Yeah. Currently, we are working with 20 Civil Society Organizations (CSOs). We can see how a CSO can apply different tools and elements of CLA to improve their work with the communities. For example, when we develop a toolkit for a topic. If a CSO uses that toolkit with different communities, and maintains the training processes outlined therein, in their support of the communities (as part of our organization's continued support), that is an example of culture change and sustainable CLA.

How are you distinguishing between inclusive development and DEIA in your work, if you are at all? How are you thinking about that?

Rabecca: I think inclusive development and DEIA are similar. Inclusive development is about making sure that everybody else feels like they are part of the process, in terms of implementation. Often, this boils down to just valuing everybody's opinion, and making sure that you are taking note of what they're bringing to your attention in order for the project to succeed. When it comes to diversity, equity and

inclusion, we [at Grassroots Soccer] are just saying that opportunities are supposed to be given equally to everybody. So, whether there is an opportunity for young people or an opportunity for leaders, we're supposed to support one another. There is really a thin line [of difference between inclusive development and DEIA], but in terms of implementation, actually, this question brings out just what is our focus: to embrace everybody. Everybody should feel part and parcel of the process of development, regardless of the project that is implemented in a given area.

Juan: We [at Chemonics] say that DEIA is a lens to be more intentional in our work. This is true. I think that the difference between this and CLA is that CLA is a tool. It's an excellent tool to help us understand the project, and implement different solutions. For me, that is maybe the difference. But I also think it's a hard question. The two have many similarities.