Community-Led Innovation Partnership

Management Response to Programme Evaluation (2020-23)

Written collectively by programme representatives from Elrha, ADRRN, Start Network, ASECSA, CDP and YEU.

Introduction and Background

Launched in 2020, the Community-Led Innovation Partnership (CLIP) programme is a collaboration initiative that has brought together a group of like-minded humanitarian innovation actors to explore how communities can be placed at the heart of the humanitarian response.

The CLIP is a partnership involving six organisations around the world who share a vision of supporting community-led innovation. These organisations are: Elrha, Start Network, Asia Disaster Reduction and Response Network (ADRRN), Yakkum Emergency Unit (YEU) in Indonesia, the Center for Disaster Preparedness (CDP) in the Philippines, and Asociación de Servicios Comunitarios de Salud (ASECSA) in Guatemala.

The CLIP aims to support the emergence and development of locally driven solutions to humanitarian problems, identified by people affected by crises. The CLIP supports three initiatives[1] in Guatemala, Indonesia, and the Philippines to work with communities along a journey to:

- **Explore**: Identify and prioritise humanitarian problem areas faced by communities,

- **Discover**: Identify and select ideas, solutions to these problems, and community innovators,

- **Develop**: Support community innovators to develop and test their ideas,

- **Grow**: Support the sustainability, uptake, and scaling of the community's solutions.

Our community-led approach seeks to ensure that the innovative new solutions that are produced are contextually appropriate and locally-owned, in the belief that this will make these solutions more likely to be sustainable and impactful.

The CLIP is structured as a multi-level partnership, with global partners Elrha, Start Network, and ADRRN acting as guides, advisors, and grant distributors for the three country-level implementing partners: ASECSA (Guatemala), YEU (Indonesia), and CDP (the Philippines). The country-level partners are fundamental to the delivery of the programme, and are responsible for holding relationships with community members, and providing technical, financial, and organisational support and training to community-level innovators.

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[1] In 2023, following the evaluation period, South Sudan was added as a fourth implementing country, with *Titi Foundation* and *CAFOD and Trócaire in Partnership (CTP)* as country-level implementing partners.

Evaluation Focus

In 2023, an independent evaluation of the CLIP programme was commissioned by the partnership and managed by Start Network. The evaluation, conducted by Catalystas Consulting, covered the period 2020-2023 and reviewed "Phase 1" of the Community-Led Innovation Partnership, with a view to provide insights into successes of – and challenges faced during – the first three years of the CLIP, as a basis of evidence to develop the second phase of the CLIP's implementation.

Following an initial inception phase and desk review of programmatic materials, the evaluation team conducted primary data collection in each of the three countries via local consultant partners. A sample of innovations and communities were selected to visit in each country of implementation, based on type of innovation, stage of innovation, location, security, accessibility, and guidance from each country partner. The evaluation team aimed to visit a selection of innovations that spanned target groups (women, persons with disabilities, the elderly, etc.), urban and remote communities, development stage and scaling innovations, protracted and immediate emergency mitigation and response innovations, and technology and indigenous knowledge-based innovations for as representative a sample per country as possible.

Country	Key Informant Interviews	Focus Group Discussions	Site Visits	Total Number of Innovations
Guatemala	25	3	4	22
Indonesia	17	3	7	9
Philippines	11	4	4	15

In the evaluation, Catalystas Consulting investigated the added value of the partnership, the overall effectiveness and impact of the CLIP, and the key factors enabling or hindering the success of implementation in each country, from local context to cost efficiency. Through collaboration with global and country partners, the evaluators examined three research questions:

1. What is the added value of the partnership?

2. To what extent have country initiatives been effective in supporting local community leadership and providing appropriate support to innovators?

3. What have community innovations achieved to date, what is the impact to date on targeted communities (evaluated via 2-3 targeted case studies per country)?

Findings

The evaluation has found a range of areas in which the CLIP programme has effectively combined humanitarian innovation with localised approaches and has laid a strong foundation of partnerships. This has enabled each country partner to approach innovation in the way that is most appropriate and effective, considering their own unique contexts, needs, and realities.

A fundamental area discussed in which the CLIP has achieved success was the strengthening of communities' capacity to identify and address their own needs and problems. The communities' active role throughout the implementation of the CLIP was highlighted as overcoming the traditional humanitarian engagement of communities as passive recipients, which was noted as allowing the community innovators to design solutions which are better suited to each context, while "learning by doing" how to become innovators and active problem-solvers themselves.

A further area of success highlighted was the emphasis placed on the importance of learning, evidence, and in approaching innovation as a non-linear process that should be adaptive, agile, and based on reflection. It was noted that one of the key components and values of the CLIP as an innovative localization programme has been establishing a safe and creative environment that allows local innovators to fail and learn from their mistakes, which has enabled both innovators and country partners to take active roles in resource allocation and flexible adaptation of programming.

These successes have not been limited to the learnings of innovators but apply equally to programmatic learning between CLIP partners. The evaluation highlights the effectiveness and efficiency that has resulted from country partners from disparate locations being enabled and encouraged to effectively come together and exchange knowledge and practices. This consistent learning and exchange between partners was noted in the report to contribute significantly to a strong programmatic coherence, despite the highly contextualized approach to implementation across contexts.

Further successes highlighted in the evaluation report were: the recovery and enhancement of ancestral and indigenous knowledge; the focus of country-level partners on promoting the inclusion of women, children, adolescents, youth, the elderly, and persons with disabilities as innovators; and the approach taken in tailoring support to the innovators and communities based on their needs, while ensuring that technical support is available to innovators from the very beginning of the process, which has enabled innovators to design and test innovations that better fit their communities and contexts, within the resources available to them.

Recommendations and Responses for Phase 2

Recommendations at the Overarching Programmatic Level:

- Facilitate the selection and support of diverse innovators, in particular encouraging and supporting implementing partners to:

  o Persist and progress in moving away from traditional top-down approaches to more community-led approaches.

  o Incentivize the inclusion of indigenous or traditional knowledge in the overall programme methodology, contextualized for each location.

- Redirect more resources and technical capacities toward the successful accomplishment of the growth phase to assure the sustainability of the innovations over time, particularly technical expertise.

- Continue the procedure of reframing the monitoring & evaluation process into a learning/process-based approach instead of a results/product-based one.

- Streamline and solidify financial management processes to ensure a clearer understanding of expected versus actual expenditure per partner at the oversight level.

- Aim to work more directly with informal, individual, and/or community-based innovators and innovation teams rather than working through custodial and traditionally structured civil society organizations (CSOs) as third-party implementing partners handling the majority of project and financial management. In the same vein, aim to equip innovation teams with increased resources and technical support to build internal capacity.

- Develop an intersectional gender inclusion strategy as well as an exit strategy [at the country-level led by each partner and across the CLIP as a programme].

- Within the partnership, strengthen the systematization and analysis of the vast amount of data and learnings — in particular financial — collected from the programme, with a streamlined organizational structure to ease the process of synthesis and draw out cross-cutting themes, trends, gaps, and opportunities.

CLIP Management Response

As we move into the second phase of the CLIP (2023 – 2025), our country-level partners have already begun engaging with a diverse range of community-based innovators, some of which are new to the programme, and others who have been supported throughout the CLIP's first phase. The selection processes used by the country partners vary across countries and contexts, though all involve significant input from communities. Communities have led on the problem exploration phase and have been central to deciding which innovations should receive support from the programme.

In this phase, a greater focus will be placed on the *Grow* stage of the innovation journey, where learnings on innovation scaling will be drawn from global partners (most notably from Elrha's Humanitarian Innovation Fund and Start Network's DEPP Innovation Labs) and contextualised through the lens of the country-level implementing partners. Research will be conducted to explore what growth and "scaling" means to community-based innovations, which would look to explore and challenge the traditional, Western-understanding based concepts of scaling which normally apply to humanitarian innovation. This research will have a particular focus on developing practical tools and approaches that can be used by community members to ensure that their innovation is financially, technically, and/or environmentally sustainable over time, and can be used by other communities when appropriate. As country-level CLIP partners have already designed and used scaling approaches and tools, this research would look to build on pre-existing knowledge and expertise, rather than designing something entirely from scratch.

Country-level implementing partners will continue to engage closely with local communities in the ways that are the most contextually appropriate for them. For some partners, this might mean working with community-based innovators directly as they have throughout the programme, while others might continue to engage the support of locally based civil society organisations to support with organisational processes and financial management and mentoring. In the Philippines, People's Organisations (a form of community-led organisational structure unique to the context) will now be expected to confidently undertake all roles in community-led innovation development, enabled by a change in their context (moving away from pandemic limitations), as well as a deepened organisational capacity on innovation process following their own growth during Phase 1. When CLIP partners are engaging in partnerships with civil society organisations, the aim will always be to build the operational capacities of community-based innovators and individuals, so that they are able to wholly and independently engage with the funding and support made available by the country-level CLIP partners.

Since the beginning of the programme in 2020, the country-level partners have maintained their own contextually informed approaches to inclusion in innovation, some with a focus on gender inclusion, some focussing on inclusion of people with disabilities, and some on LGBT+ inclusion. Through the next two years, we will work with all partners to explore intersectional inclusion in community-led humanitarian innovation and will encourage each country-level partner to learn from each other's approaches, to strengthen their own unique and specific focuses. In the specific area of gender inclusion, all country-level partners (including the newly established programme in South Sudan) will be working with local trainers in 2024 to develop contextualised gender inclusion strategies for their programme, MEAL and advocacy approaches.

One aspect of inclusion which has been standard across all contexts has been the championing and application of Local and Indigenous Knowledge in innovation. Over the next two years, we will be exploring approaches to formalise the use of this knowledge, both in discrete innovations, but also in the processes and methodology of the programme itself. All CLIP partners will begin this approach by exploring the existing use of Local and Indigenous Knowledge across their supported innovations, which will be synthesised and shared in Q4 of 2023. Following this, the partners plan to undertake a process of learning and reframing of existing CLIP innovation methodology through an Indigenous Knowledge lens.

We will continue to iterate and refine the programme's approach to monitoring & evaluation, financial management, and knowledge synthesis and management, by working to ensure that all programme partners have a clear understanding of programme indicators, budgets and expenditure, and available knowledge products. We will continue our localised and participatory approach of working together with communities to design MEAL frameworks, tools, and context-appropriate methodology. Our goal in improving these systems will be to have processes in place that are as light touch as is possible while still ensuring that country-level partners can synthesise and share their learnings in a way that highlights their successes and challenges and can be used for future learning and development. As the CLIP progresses through its next phase, we will further formalise our approach to analysing and synthesising learnings collected over the past years with a view to identifying and exploring cross-cutting themes, trends, gaps, and opportunities, to inform the design of any future phases of the CLIP, and to contribute to the global knowledgebase on community-led approaches to humanitarian innovation and action.

The CLIP programme is funded by the UK Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office until March 2025. With this in mind, we will be working with all partners in the programme to co-develop an exit strategy to ensure that sustainability and impact can be achieved in each country after the end of the programme period, if no further funding is received. The partnership will also develop strategies for if future funding is granted, to consider how the CLIP might evolve in future phases. As part of this, we would explore whether all partners would benefit from – and would wish to – continue to remain a part of the CLIP in the same capacity after 2025, or whether some partners would instead transition into other roles, such as operating in an advisory capacity.

Recommendations on Ecosystem Strengthening:

- Reframe existing roles to shift power dynamics further in favour of localized decision making, increase the level of trust in country partners as leaders, and increase risk-sharing by global partners.

    o Further decentralize programmatic decision-making to the level of the implementing partners wherever possible.

- Design mechanisms to incentivize the strengthening of direct relationships between the implementing partners and communities to increase the effectiveness and efficiency of the programme. It is noted that while certain country partners made the deliberate decision to limit direct relationships with communities in favour of allowing innovation teams to lead community engagement, direct community engagement can serve as a reinforcing support system rather than undermining innovator communication.

- Continue to expand the network of technical experts and mentors to support innovations and to promote articulation and feedback mechanisms between innovators to leverage and increase the power of the network.

- Tap into local partners and other programmes that, with a shared vision about the future and expected changes, can help the innovation to move forward with the changes expected by the CLIP programme.

CLIP Management Response

In Phase 1 of the CLIP, country-level partners adapted their approaches during the pandemic to limit direct community engagement in the interests of safety, while still maintaining communication with communities and local innovation teams. As the pandemic situation has improved, the country-level implementing partners have worked directly with community members to explore the problems faced by communities, identify or develop potential solutions, and to decide which innovations will be supported by the programme. As part of this, the implementing partners have been working with a wider variety of technical experts and mentors, drawn from local communities, civil society organisations, universities and the private sector, to provide technical support to the community innovation teams. Innovators with the same focus in each context have worked together to share understandings, approaches, and mentoring. This work has been ongoing, with implementing partners finding it easier to engage new networks of technical experts and mentors as the awareness of their projects has grown.

As part of the development of an exit strategy as discussed in the previous recommendation, the programme partners will work together to explore whether it would be desired or beneficial to reframe roles and responsibilities across the partnership, with a view of shifting power to the country-level implementing partners. Though this recommendation is given in the evaluation, it has not yet been fully discussed amongst all partners, so the first step will be to identify the needs, appetite, feasibility, and benefits of such a potential reframing.

A further focus in the second phase of the CLIP implementation will be to explore network building between other partners and programmes, both in the countries of implementation and globally, with the goals of better supporting innovations to grow and become embedded in local processes; of enabling innovations to be shared and used in different contexts, both in the same and different countries; and of developing an ecosystem of community-led innovation both in-country and across contexts.

Recommendations On Knowledge Management and Communication:

- The global partnership should increase support to implementing partners in disseminating knowledge management materials to wider audiences in order to further expand the reach and impact of the CLIP's activities, both in the three countries and globally.

- It could be a highly beneficial next step to create a national or regional strategic coordination network of communities, CSOs, and nongovernmental organizations focused on strategic communication of practical applications of innovation programming, in particular with the inclusion of increased opportunities for country partners to hold in-person exchanges and sessions.

CLIP Management Response

All partners across the CLIP are aware of the importance of effectively synthesizing and sharing the knowledge developed throughout the programme. Though the primary aims of country-level implementing partners are to empower communities, support the growth of effective innovations, and to strengthen the humanitarian innovation ecosystem in their own context, a key aim across the partnership is to share what we have learned so that other organisations, programmes, and movements might learn from our work to better support community-led humanitarian action and innovation. It should be noted that the country-level implementing partners do currently undertake a significant amount of knowledge management and communication in their own countries and contexts, and - due to the specific timing of the evaluation – certain knowledge sharing activities were not captured. As an example, in the Philippines, a series of sharing knowledge activities have been held, both among innovators and at the national level with government duty bearers and stakeholders, which have gained notable expressions of support from government agencies and private organisations for ongoing growth support.

A core focus of the partnership over the next two years will be the effective dissemination of knowledge gathered by partners, both locally throughout each country and on a global level throughout the humanitarian system. The global partnership has recently refreshed the CLIP communications strategy, and have an iterative communications plan supporting this, which will be informed by an ongoing input from country-level partners to ensure we are highlighting the key learning that they want to share. We know that we cannot achieve this change alone, so in parallel to this work, we will be exploring partnerships with national, regional, and international CSOs, NGOs, academics, and community networks to share the impact, approach, and learnings from the CLIP though not immediately set up a formal coordination network within this grant period.
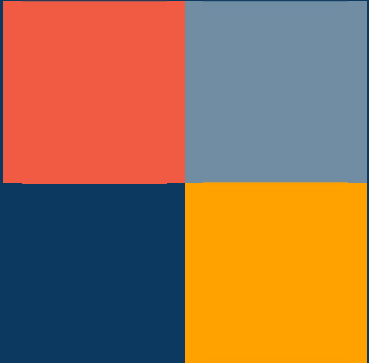
Recommendations On Resource Allocation:

- It is recommended that while the disbursement of cash as a specific form of financial support may be a positive method to increase trust-building with innovators and communities, any such activity should be accompanied by a capacity strengthening component on resource management and financial literacy to aid the sustainability of the programme, with adherence to the aforementioned improved financial reporting processes. Financial support in the form of in-kind materials, such as in the case of ASECSA, should also be considered a positive approach worth continuing.

- The specific learning exchange sessions between ASECSA, CDP, and YEU should continue, with specific knowledge-sharing sessions on the development of resource allocation approaches in shifting from an equal approach to an equitable approach based on each innovation's needs, such as has already been initiated in Guatemala.

- Partners should strive to identify private, public, and national / international cooperation entities to link the partners and innovators together for post-CLIP sustainability, with the inclusion of capacity strengthening components on resource mobilization and appropriate private/public sector business development training.

CLIP Management Response

The approach to resource allocation taken by ASECSA in Guatemala – of equitably allocating resources (financial and in-kind materials) to innovators based on need, rather than a standard financial amount to each innovator – will be focused on as a specific topic of learning for the partnership. This learning, however, will be undertaken and applied contextually, in the understanding that this approach may not be appropriate for all contexts, and that country-level implementing partners should apply the principles and methodology of the CLIP programme to their own setting in a way that is informed by, and responds to, their own unique contextual norms and understandings.

Community-based innovators will continue to be supported with knowledge sharing on resource management and financial literacy for innovators, delivered in a way that is appropriate to context, whether this is directly delivered by the country-level implementing partner, by locally based CSOs, or by private or public sector training services. In this phase, an underlying focus of all capacity building will be on ensuring sustainability after March 2025, as part of a wider exit strategy, should the programme receive no further funding.