Community-led development needs a solid, evolving evidence base

How can we learn together about CLD?
Gathering and analyzing what’s out there, for the sake of communities, practitioners, policymakers, donors, advocates, researchers, and more...
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DM&E for Peace

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Intro: What is community-led development, and what is the Movement?

1. Overview of the CLD Learning Agenda and our project
2. Six initial *elements of CLD* with evaluation implications.
3. High-level CLD research framing and methodology
4. Status of current research effort
INTRO

What is community-led development?
Which development approach is the best?

Which sector is most important?

Which ideas will stick?
All of them!
But only when the relevant ones are selected and crafted into a mosaic by those whose own lives are at the center of it all.
What people are saying

We need a community development 2.0.
Barbara Hughes, Director, Office of MCH & Nutrition, Global Health, USAID

Who knows how to work on social capital and aspiration?
Greg Collins, Dpty Asst Admin, Food Security, USAID

A new narrative for locally-led development is emerging.
Global Fund for Community Foundations
Community-led Development

Inclusion: voice and agency for women, youth, marginalized groups

Self-reliance

Local ownership

Accountability all around

Sustainable outcomes

Productive Partnerships with Local Government

National, Subnational Government: policies, practices, resources

Devolution

Sectoral needs met: health, education, nutrition, livelihood, WASH, etc.

thriving Civil Society
Development happens in communities. It is in communities where women, men and youth can discover their voice, assert their rights, and mobilize action to achieve their aspirations.

www.communityleddev.org
Part I

Overview: Gathering CLD wisdom and know-how
Driving this effort:

Shared recognition among Movement members and others that...

“Creative, flexible evaluative tools are needed to build the evidence base for community-led approaches.”


March, 2019

“There is a large potential for increasing the sharing of experience and methodological approaches across agencies facing similar evaluation challenges.”

--Pablo Fajnzylber, World Bank. *Why Growth Alone is Not Enough to Reduce Poverty.* What can evaluative evidence teach us about making growth inclusive?

July 17, 2018
Emerging CLD Learning Agenda

- Where has CLD worked well, and in what context? Where has it not worked well?
- What is its impact (contribution and/or attribution)? What does it do best?
- Is some of the impact overestimated or missed out?
- What role do unpredictability, self-organization and emergence of new capacities play in the impact of CLD initiatives?
- How do we effectively measure the impact of CLD?
- How do self-reliance and sustainability relate to each other?
- Are CLD efforts sustainable? How do we capture the sustainability of CLD efforts through our evaluations?
Specific goals of this research project

1. To assess what we already know and illuminate gaps

2. To produce findings that will foster effective CLD

3. To co-create shared understanding, framing, and methodological innovation around CLD
   - purpose of improving CLD within our organizations but most importantly in much larger arenas.
Part II

Six basic elements of CLD that our research framing and methods need to recognize and examine
CLD Element 1: **Context varies every time**

“Obviously all humans share some responses to experience, simply because of their shared biological heritage. [Yet] different groups, and the same group at different times, can have different experiences and therefore in some sense live in different worlds.”

--Thomas Kuhn
CLD Element 2: Driven by intangibles

“Real and equitable progress requires exceptional attention to the detailed and often mundane work of noticing what is invisible to many.”

CLD Element 3: **Accountability must be right**

*Sustainable development starts with local voices, strengthens listening and accountability mechanisms between government and citizens, and holds donors and implementers accountable to them.*

Source: Laurie Zivetz, Jindra Cekan, Valuing Voices
CLD Element 4: Built on complexity

Unless [our] process encompasses the relevant aspects of complexity, we risk not doing justice to the assessment of the interventions, and our recommendations may not provide countries with the guidance they need to implement these recommendations.

--World Health Organization

https://gh.bmj.com/content/4/Suppl_1/e000963
CLD Element 5:
With complexity comes adaptation

“A workable notion of complexity is the bedrock upon which adaptive capacity is strengthened.”
CLD Element 6: Self-reliance and sustainability are central

How do we make sure that these two facets of CLD remain central and are achieved?

Example: M&E for Sustained and Emerging Impacts (SEIE). Valuing Voices’ Approach to Embedding Sustainability in the Project Cycle (Source: betterevaluation.org)
Part III

Considering options: high-level framing and methodology
Which methodology & tools fit best?

“Developers of evidence-informed guidance often apply processes and methods designed originally for assessing the comparative effectiveness of clinical interventions that are ill-adapted to formulating recommendations on highly context-dependent...interventions.”

--*Complex health interventions in complex systems: improving the process and methods for evidence-informed health decisions.*

WHO sponsored supplement of BMJ Global Health Journal, 2018/9
Our methodology need has emerged in turbulent times

Graphic from: *Handbook of Emergent Methods*
We have a need for methodological adaptation and innovation.

Together we can co-create a way forward.

Graphic from: *Handbook of Emergent Methods*
Learning about CLD:

We need to know more than “Did it work as planned?”

And, what happens afterwards?

We in CLD are not alone or unique in our need for evolved framing and methods

New in 2019: Complexities in WHO guideline development. Addressing complexity brings many challenges to all involved, including understanding and considering:

- Factors influencing intervention impact
- Context: effect on implementation and impact
- Attribution vs. contribution: when intervention works best in synergy with other factors
- Voices and inclusion
- Criteria beyond effectiveness

Adapted from WHO website 28 Jan 2019
### SELF-RELIANCE LEARNING AGENDA QUESTIONS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Question</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>How can local, sub-national, national, and regional voices, priorities, and contributions be integrated into how USAID fosters self-reliance?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>How can we engage local and other relevant systems such that they become more self-reliant and sustain results?</td>
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Realism vs. positivism

**Positivism**: a philosophical system that holds that every rationally justifiable assertion can be scientifically verified or is capable of logical or mathematical proof.

---Dictionary.com

The complete **realist** question is: “What works, for whom, in what respects, to what extent, in what contexts, and how?” In order to answer that question, realist evaluators aim to identify the underlying generative mechanisms that explain ‘how’ the outcomes were caused and the influence of context.

---Betterevaluation.org
### Difference between narrative reviews and evidence syntheses

Evidence syntheses differ from traditional narrative or literature reviews in several ways:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Narrative review</th>
<th>Evidence Synthesis</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Search methods</td>
<td>not systematic, nor validated, nor peer reviewed</td>
<td>systematic, highly structured to minimize bias; conducted much like other scientific studies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inclusion/Exclusion criteria</td>
<td>Not explicitly stated</td>
<td>Included in protocol or developed post hoc</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bias</td>
<td>potential for authors to selectively include or exclude studies to support a position</td>
<td>attempts to minimize bias based on protocol, non-selective reporting of outcomes and transparent and reproducible search strategies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Replication &amp; updating</td>
<td>Difficult since search methodology not reported in detail in methods section nor included in full in the appendices</td>
<td>Designed to be reproducible and facilitate updating</td>
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More appropriate for this effort
## Scoping and Systematic Reviews

### Differences between systematic and scoping reviews

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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Scoping review</th>
<th>Systematic review</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Research question</td>
<td>Broadly defined</td>
<td>Highly focused</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inclusion/Exclusion criteria</td>
<td>Developed post hoc at study selection stage</td>
<td>Developed at protocol stage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Study selection</td>
<td>All study types</td>
<td>Defined study types</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data extraction</td>
<td>“Charts” data according to key issues, themes, etc.</td>
<td>Synthesizes &amp; aggregates findings</td>
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**However** both systematic reviews and scoping reviews require comprehensive and structured searches of the literature to maximize recall and decrease bias.

More appropriate for this effort.
Meta-analysis

- Subset of systematic reviews
- Method for systematically combining pertinent qualitative and quantitative study data from several selected studies to develop a single conclusion that has greater statistical power.

Purposes:
- establish statistical significance among conflicting studies
- estimate of effect magnitude
- complex analysis of harms, safety data, and benefits
- examine subgroups not statistically significant

Advantages: statistical power, confirmatory data analysis, extrapolation to general population affected, considered an evidence-based resource

Disadvantages
- Difficult and time consuming to identify appropriate studies
- Not all studies provide adequate data for inclusion and analysis
- Requires advanced statistical techniques
- Heterogeneous study populations aren’t good fit

Source: Himmelfarb Health Sciences Library, George Washington University

Therefore, not so appropriate for this effort
Limitations of traditional formal methods

Limitations: “Whilst RCTs have been applicable in a far broader range of contexts than was originally imagined even by their proponents, there are important questions of effectiveness which are not amenable to large n impact evaluations.”

--Howard White et al. “The rise of impact evaluations and challenges which CEDIL is to address.” *Journal of Development Effectiveness.* November 2018

“The gold standard of Randomized Control Trials (RCTs) is almost impossible to conduct in the case of community-led development – in part because there are so many variables to control for, so outcomes can be masked by hidden factors.”

Formal methods in realist context: “Horses for Courses” *

Within realist or emergent framing, RCTS and other more formal methods may actually be complementary at times.

“No that the first flush of RCT formalism is passing, even the top RCT practitioners are starting to acknowledge how much they couple synthetic methods with their formal analysis. Economist Martin Ravaillion has been pushing this issue of "horses for courses" rather than a hierarchy of methods hard for some time now too.”

--Scott Guggenheim, Development Practitioner

* An expression indicating that jobs or roles should match one’s particular experience, strengths, or skill set. --The Free Dictionary, adapted
Realist Review

- Considers qualitative and quantitative evidence
- Can be used to investigate complex questions to inform what works for whom, under what circumstances, and why.
- Can directly inform policy or clinical decision (for example...why change agency interventions and strategies are effective...)
- Can provide explanations or hypothesis across interventions or programs that share similar underlying “theories of change” as to why they work (or do not) for particular end-users in particular contexts
- Explanations can take form of context-mechanism-outcome configurations

Adapted from: Kastner et al. “Conceptual recommendations for selecting the most appropriate knowledge synthesis method to answer research questions related to complex evidence.” Journal of Clinical Epidemiology. 73(2016): 43-49
Example: WHO starts with scoping

Conceptual Considerations

1. Scoping of the guidelines
   - Petticrew et al.

2. Formulating the questions

Methodological Considerations

3. Synthesizing the evidence

4. Grading of the evidence
   - Montgomery et al. Considerations in rating certainty of evidence

5. Formulating recommendations
   - Rehfuess et al.
Emergent Design

Emergent design involves data collection and analysis procedures that can evolve over the course of a research project in response to what is learned in the earlier parts of the study.

--The SAGE Encyclopedia of Qualitative Research Methods

These research techniques are particularly useful for discovering knowledge that lies hidden, that is, difficult to tap into because it has not been part of the dominant culture or discourse. Because they are techniques or tools, they can be applied to different methodologies and in different disciplines, making them highly pertinent to a range of researchers. --Handbook of Emergent Methods

Yes! appropriate for this effort
Realist Synthesis

Realist synthesis is an increasingly popular approach to the review and synthesis of evidence, which focuses on understanding the mechanisms by which an intervention works (or not).

-- Rycroft-Malone et al. Realist synthesis: illustrating the method for implementation research. *Implementation Science* 2004. Yes! Also along the right lines for us...
Qualitative Meta-Synthesis

- Intentional, coherent approach to analyzing data across qualitative studies.
- Process: researchers identify a specific research question and then search for, select, appraise, summarize, and combine qualitative evidence to address the research question.
- Uses rigorous qualitative methods to synthesize existing qualitative studies to construct greater meaning through an interpretative process.

"Goal is not aggregative in the sense of 'adding studies together' as with a meta-analysis. On the contrary, it is interpretative in broadening understanding of a particular phenomenon."

- Not as exhaustive as systematic review.
- Search may rely more heavily on inclusion and exclusion criteria.

Source: Erwin, Elizabeth. *Understanding Qualitative Metasynthesis: Issues and Opportunities in Early Childhood Intervention Research.*

Where are we: for our purposes, for this effort

- **Positivism**
- **Realism**
- **Emergent methods**

**More Specific**

- **Realist Synthesis**
- **Qualitative Meta-synthesis**

- **Evidence Synthesis**
- **Scoping Review**
- **Systematic Review, including meta-analysis**
- **Randomized control trials**

**Sustained and Emerging Impacts (SEIE) -- next chapter perhaps?**
Realist, synthetic framing and method(s): what and how can they deliver?

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<tr>
<th><strong>Top-line Results.</strong> Will the investigation illuminate, generally, what community-led development can and cannot deliver?</th>
<th>The most formal methods deliver the most definitive answers--but strictly adhering to them, in this case, would result in discarding of much of available, rich, valid data. Nevertheless, this synthesis should be able offer top-line conclusions. Our synthetic approach will highlight any definitive quantitative findings, which, alongside quantitative data, will enrich the results.</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Getting under the hood: context - mechanism - outcome.</strong> We know critical elements of community-led development affect and are affected by: context, intangibles, accountability, complexity, adaptation, self-reliance, and sustainability--and other elements perhaps, that will emerge. Why, how, and when?</td>
<td>The most valuable learning may happen here--given the complexity of the work. The implications for design; implementation; monitoring, evaluation and learning; and sustainability potentially are manyfold. This non-linear learning is at the heart of realist and emergent research and design. For complex interventions (as many community-led efforts are) taking place in complex environments, grasping nuance is indispensable.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Credibility.</strong> What steps can we take to ensure the findings are useful and credible to key audiences, including those who tend to rely on formal quantitative approaches?</td>
<td>1. Adherence to Realist Synthesis and Emergent research guidance and standards, including making all raw data accessible. 2. Ongoing documentation of the methodology design rationale and process 3. Continuous scrutiny of the Working Group and others, including an external panel</td>
</tr>
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Snapshot: progress of our research effort

- 35 member staff volunteering from 23 organizations
- 3 subgroups defining CLD, creating the process, sorting evidence
- First body of evidence for consideration: 350+ evaluations shared already by our members
- Advisory Group: Three professors and implementers
The Research Working Group of the Movement for Community-led Development

*A community-led world is closer than you think...*
Sources (if not cited on slide)

2. WHO graphic of pathway: https://gh.bmj.com/content/4/Suppl_1/e000963
3. Photos of signs are from Signspotting