**2022 CLA CASE COMPETITION**
**COLLABORATE · LEARN · ADAPT**

**Case Title:**

Deconstructing the Echo-Chamber: Using Local Media to Report on Resiliency

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Photo Caption & Credit: Local media representatives, trained by RLA taking pictures and videos of a local community group as part of learning by doing to cover co-creation. Credit: Faith Njoki, USAID RLA Communications Manager

**Summary:**

The Resilience Learning Activity (RLA) is a program designed to encourage collaboration to harmonize USAID resiliency investments with county initiatives in North and Southeastern Kenya. These activities are done through a joint work planning (JWP) process where USAID implimenting partner (IP) activities are aligned with individual Kenyan county work-plans along with other donors and/or private sector investments. This process uses a co-creation and co-implementation strategy built off the principles of collaboration, learning and adapting (CLA) to design a county and USAID Kenya joint work plan that RLA is tasked with investing into technical approaches while monitoring the progress of activities agreed upon through JWP calendar year.

From June 2021 through May 2022 it was the second year of the RLA lead JWP initiative.  In trying to further develop this process and create awareness on the activities implimented the RLA Knowledge Management team noted that the JWP localization approach includes Kenyan counties, national entities (e.g., National Disaster Management Agency), USAID implementation, and other donors and private sectors actors report on their success and challenges within the echo chambers of county, USAID and national media outlets. There was no community voice. Therfore, the RLA  team designed an approach to train local media (journalists) in understanding USAID's localization strategy and resiliency strategy designed by USAID and the Kenyan national and sub-national government entities. The trainings had community journalists report on resilience stories for development based on the RLA JWP process including the prevention of and preparedness for climate/human-made-related extreme events, highlighting (JWP) activates that were county-owned, country-led while allowing both county officials and the individuals living in these communities to share their stories on both the successes and challenges of these programs.

**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?**

There are significant investments each year by county officials and USAID to support areas that are subjected to frequent droughts, conflict, and social inequalities. These investments, when properly combined with the resourcefulness of communities, can often blend local knowledge with technical knowledge to incubate innovative resilience-building ideas. The factors that influence community resilience, including physical, human, financial, natural, and societal aspects of life, are often interconnected, meaning that they must be factored into activities and initiatives that inform county policy and development partner activities to ensure that lessons learned and best practices are developed in a manner that is sustainable and, where appropriate, amplified to ensure respective knowledge management and institutional memory can be retained to further evolve these initiatives.

Through RLA's work in the JWP process, the project recognizes just how useful learnings and studies from USAID IPs can be when captured and reported. Making technical information more accessible is beneficial, but often the knowledge sharing is limited to programs and county communication teams. This information proves useful to design activities and policies that address social norms and perceptions, which can inform how community members (and program participants) evaluate their choices and engage in policy dialogue while informing county and USAID initiatives. However, this work can stagnate through county and/or USAID communication channels. RLA's work to inform local media on resiliency investments, policies, and impact created an opportunity to amplify these stories through traditional media channels, ensuring these stories were reported using localization strategy with the media using their learned vernacular as they report to a wider audience who further can adopt adaptative management principles as they apply individual resiliency approaches in the household.

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

Through RLA's dedication to focuses on CLA principles of external collaboration, openness, and continuous learning and improvement, including local media to report on USAID and County Government resiliency initiatives allowed for deeper research and understanding of how to inform best practices and lessons learned that fall-outside traditional social media, technical reports, and other radio messaging and communication channels.

Collaborating with the local media creates a narrative for community-led stories that provides an authentic dialogue for resilient voices from the communities where USAID and county-led interventions are implemented. By adapting our approaches to be more open and continuously improving RLA's knowledge and communication using the CLA principles to support allowed us to further generate a recognizable voice for communities with limited access to communication messages. The local media learned how to package audio-visual formats that appealed to their community members allowing them to improve their awareness of the USAID and county development interventions impact while adopting and learning about best practices from others within their networks.

**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.**

The JWP initiative presented an opportunity to collaborate with stakeholders to gather stories and images that tell compelling stories of community resilience that included prevention of and preparedness for climate/human-made extreme events, COVID-19, and other issues that are faced on a daily basis.

This initiative aimed to encourage county-owned, country-led reporting through RLA' training for local journalists and county communications teams. When RLA drafted this initial approach, the program reviewed the JWP process and designed a curriculum that outlined the following three training segments:
1. Training all stakeholders on the common aspects of documenting best practices.
2. USAID IPs pitching their work and story elements to the media team; and
3. Field story coverage and editing.

Following the training, RLA then had the participants submit their stories for peer review feedback and clearance before being aired on various media channels.

The trainings provided an opportunity to discuss critical issues that affect both the media IPs, including low levels of awareness of the USAID programs and development implementation processes within the media, limited technical skills among local journalists to report on economic development, and sectoral specific issues that include relationships challenges between local implementing partners and the media, media outlets increasing demand for payment to cover county and USAID development-related issues, and limitations on how to utilize digital platforms to share information.

Through the CLA learning and improvement approach, participants were grouped into five teams. Each team used an external collaboration approach that comprised of individual media members from print, TV, radio, digital platform journalist, photographer, USAID implementing partner staff, and a county communications officer to capture a story. The teams visited communities where the USAID implementing partners executed interventions to witness JWP activities and interview participants on their experiences. This allowed for a participatory storytelling approach as community voices and experiences were amplified. Stories covered through various formats, including print, broadcast (radio and TV), and digital platforms, were reviewed on the last day for partners' clarification and clearance. Through this process, one of the local journalists submitted his story in the national competition and was recognized as the winner of the  annual journalism excellent award (AJEA), digital health category, by the Media Council of Kenya.

**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?**

Collaborating with local media outlets further informed the USAID Kenya localization strategy. It ensured that as USAID and county-led initiatives are designed, all communication is shared across all levels of resiliency programming. Engaging local media ensures that the community is able to tell their own stories while ensuring it's done in a matter that their neighbors and fellow family members can understand. The local media also acts as a necessary feedback loop to county and USAID IPs, amplifying their voices so that they are heard to inform future resiliency investments and county policy.

Given the local media outlets speak the local languages, it allows the audiences to identify and connect with these stories more than those of mainstream media or unknown experts. This difference in language provides a secondary level of "localization" to ensure those most impacted by approaches can provide feedback through media outlets in a format that is easily understood.

By applying certain CLA principles to the media training, the RLA program was able to generate an openness, that was previously strained between local media, county government stakeholders, USAID implementing partners, and community leaders. The training informed local media of the ongoing resiliency investments and activities that are ongoing in their respective communities. Through the training RLA was able to inform local media on these initiatives and then through the "applying continuous learning and improving" approach, reporters were able to generate and report on resiliency content that would previously fall outside traditional, county, donor and national media channels.

**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?**

The use of a CLA approach has not yet been used to its full potential, which will be an object of future joint monitoring visits (by USAID Kenya staff) and in the further development of the JWP process.

County officials, national Kenyan entities, and USAID IPs will benefit from the local media's efforts to further educate the public on the success and challenges of activities created through the JWP. This will create feedback loops for IP staff, county officials, and others. The local media reports about how these activities are perceived using voices that differ from communication officers and that of national media generate new voices outside of standard development echo chambers.

Following this training, there continues to be further development in supporting local media as outlined below:
1. USAID IPs and Kenyan county officials are now setting aside funding in their budgets to further engage local media outlets to report on USAID and county resiliency initiatives (e.g., Joint Work plan).

2. 30 best practices interventions were reported on by local media, highlighting the co-creation approach between IPs and county officials.

3. Development of county communication manuals that also design approaches on how to engage local media for events.

Through this RLA training, we are ultimately able to report through local and national media how USAID resiliency and county investments are supporting the communities they work in.
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**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?**

Through the support of the USAID Kenya mission which continues to champion a localization strategy, other USAID implementing partners were able to "buy-in" when they identified stories, site locations, and allocated their own staff to participate in these programs.

Given our role as a CLA program that is inclusive of a secretariat responsibility, the RLA program committed our resources while leveraging our own internal networks and relationships to act as the convener of all stakeholders to design and implement this activity.

Additionally, given the USAID Kenya mission's strong relationship with county government officials, this initiative received the support from the local media, provided the technical support through identification of activities co-created with USAID IPs, allotted their own county communication officers and, where appropriate, the necessary security provisions to ensure these activities could be reported in a safe environment allowing the communities and media members to generate articles without issue.