2023 CLA CASE COMPETITION

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Case Title:

CLA and Delivering Water Systems in Complex Crises in Mozambique

Name:

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Organization:

Food for the Hungry

Summary:

Through the USAID BHA-funded Northern Mozambique Complex Emergency Response (NOMCER) project implemented in northern Mozambique, FH used CLA to revisit lessons learned from previous projects, which were to deepen and widen collaborations and to continually improve and adapt interventions to the quickly changing context. The project faced a convergence of external crises and needed to adapt its WASH interventions to be effective. Although FH has a culture and commitment to continuous learning, improvement and evidence-based decision-making, it has been a common practice to focus on evaluations for reporting purposes. CLA has helped foster mindsets and a culture for learning to continuously adapt and improve solutions for project participants and affected communities to achieve greater impact. Although tight project timelines and heavy work schedules made adopting CLA difficult, leadership made CLA a priority, and project teams found immediate value from CLA principles to help deliver project goals. In the end, the CLA process guided the collaboration of multiple teams and stakeholders including senior management, community members and government personnel to leverage past experiences, apply lessons learned and decide on critical changes. The pivot to CLA in a fragile setting and emergency response helped FH and the consortium it led to reach 30,000 project participants with solar-powered water solutions that were resilient and sustainable, and which in turn contributed to community hygiene, food security and well-being despite the challenging circumstances.

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

Food for the Hungry (FH) served as prime for the USAID BHA Northern Mozambique Complex Emergency Response (NOMCER) which we delivered with our partners in the Mozambique Humanitarian Consortium (CHEMO). The project provided relief and recovery assistance for internally displaced persons (IDPs) and host communities in the Cabo Delgado and Nampula provinces. The 12-month (September 2021 to August 2022) project was multi-sectoral with Water Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) as one of the main components. The project area was characterized by unpredictable insecurity incidents, repeated displacements of people from their communities in search of safer communities to settle, and frequent extreme weather events including tropical storms and localized droughts.

The project faced a convergence of external crises, specifically the escalation of insurgent activities further south of the Cabo Delgado province as well as the cyclone that hit the Nampula province. On June 5, 2022, the insurgent activities escalated rapidly, with a total of 12 insurgent attacks recorded within three weeks. In Nampula communities, WASH activities were affected by the onset of Cyclone Gombe in mid-March.

To help manage the complexity of the operation, especially in light of these multiple shocks and stresses, the project team decided to employ a CLA approach to ensure the project was shock-responsive and human-centered, incorporating learnings from former projects to deliver solar-powered water solutions in a fragile setting. The CLA approach helped to shift the project's evaluation approach from traditional monitoring and reporting to one of continuous learning and adapting interventions for results. CLA helped address major project weaknesses in delivering sustainable and resilient solar-powered water systems.

2. **What two CLA Sub-Components are most clearly reflected in your case?**

External Collaboration

Decision-Making

3. **HOW: What steps did you take to apply CLA approaches to address the challenge or opportunity described above?**

FH incorporated lessons learned from past projects that pointed to the need to widen and deepen collaboration and incorporate adaptive learning to ensure program impact under changing conditions. Although it was challenging to implement a CLA approach in the tight timelines and heavy workload of the emergency context, FH took advantage of various project gathering spaces and meetings to engage all stakeholders. Considering the constantly shifting context of implementation in northern Mozambique, the senior leadership team realized the importance of CLA to adapt to risks and needs within communities and meet the project goal. Because leadership valued CLA, they empowered staff to use it in their decision points to overcome what is all-too-often a culture of using monitoring and evaluation only for reporting purposes. FH implemented the CLA approach in three categories:

1. External Collaboration: Regular coordination meetings were held with external stakeholders such as government institutions, WASH committees, the WASH cluster, and private sector members who were jointly designing the water systems to learn and adapt to the heightened risks and needs of water systems in the target area. A rapid survey carried out in the project area found that a significant number of already existing solar-powered water systems ceased to function, partly because of poor quality materials used in their construction which were not weather resistant, but mainly because of poor governance and lack of financial sustainability to maintain these systems. CLA principles of more robust external collaboration improved stakeholder inclusion and representation within the WASH committees that resulted in more transparent, inclusive, accountable and sustainable system delivery, including the local acceptance and collection of water user fees, even in the midst of a crisis context.

2. Continuous Learning for Improvement: Regular monitoring visits, information sharing, and joint technical training were conducted across the project to ensure that staff were equipped with technical skills to implement agreed adaptations. Monthly feedback meetings were promoted at the community level with the WASH committees. By including local leaders in the broader training, FH created an environment for continuous learning. Leaders were equipped with skills and capacity to make and implement decisions for a greater impact of the WASH facilities in their communities. Post-distribution monitoring and mid-term surveys were also useful in collecting participant feedback and measuring community satisfaction.

3. Decisions Made to Adapt: Three examples of CLA-informed decisions were:

1) Restructuring the WASH committees to include a well-trained and dedicated operations and maintenance person, which enhanced effective and sustainable management of the solar-powered systems.

2) Revising the training package for WASH Committees governance to address the heightened demand and scale of water system performance. Contractors were required to provide comprehensive training to the operator of the water system. Accountability mechanisms were defined for increased transparency in the management of water user fees. WASH committees and the operator worked together to encourage community members to use safe water and therefore increase the number of users and contributors. While progress was gradual, FH believed that the adaptations improved the sustainability of the solar-powered water systems. For similar projects in the future, the consortium would recommend private management of such water systems to further improve the sustainability of the solar-powered water schemes.

3) Relocating the solar-powered water system planned for the community of Nantove to the community of Muaja, since host communities and IDPs migrated to Muaja owing to crises.

4. **RESULTS: Choose one of the following questions to answer.**

We know you may have answers in mind for both questions; However please choose one to highlight as part of this case story

B. ORGANIZATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS

FH intends to include CLA across all our country programs and ensure that lessons learned from this project are documented and applied to future projects. FH global leadership also intends to incorporate CLA principles into its emerging work on human-centered design and as part of the organization's reimagination process, which includes a new program model to promote resilience and flourishing communities in the hardest places. FH will consider recruiting CLA experts in our global and country offices to promote its mainstreaming in programs.

5. **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?**

Drawing from our use of CLA in the USAID BHA-funded NOMCER project implemented in northern Mozambique, FH would advise others working to deliver a complex activity in the context of complex crises:
Culture: The willingness of senior leadership to practice CLA was critical in the adaptations made. The nature of humanitarian work is one where everything is time-sensitive, so leadership buy-in to pause and reflect (even when there are multiple critical priorities and time pressures) is important to ensure stakeholders continue to guide project outcomes and that adaptations are made to ensure results in the facing of complex challenges.
Resources: In its recruitment, FH prioritizes hiring staff who are from the local communities whenever possible. By having staff who deeply understand the context, risks and needs of communities, FH is better able to discern when adjustments are needed in projects for impact and sustainability. Additionally, FH's long-standing presence in the area allows for greater collaboration, as they have worked with local government officials in many ways over several years.

In collaborating, learning and adapting, the project team learned the value of stopping to evaluate where changes and adjustments needed to be made. The nature of emergency response is there is constant pressure to implement quickly. Despite these emergency conditions, FH intentionally embraced CLA to overcome a culture of evaluation for only reporting and embraced learning and adaptation for greater impact. FH systematically and intentionally increased its internal and external collaboration as a way to contribute not only to rapid learning and adaptation but also co-creation with stakeholders, to ensure that water solutions were appropriate, effective and sustainable, reaching 30,000 people.