

# Bite-Sized Learning: CLA Paves the Way for Putting Evidence and Learning to Use - Q&A Session

Session on 6/5/2024

*This document contains a transcription of the Q&A session that took place during Session 3 of USAID's 2023-2024 Bite-Sized Learning Series: "CLA Paves the Way: For Putting Evidence and Learning to Use." For more information related to the session, and to the Bite-Sized Learning series overall, [visit Learning Lab](#).*

## **How can we know the criterion for assessing CLA cases?**

**Heather Risley (USAID Senior Learning Advisor, Moderator)** Encouraged participants to join the CLA Case Competition launch webinars to learn more about how to submit a CLA case and how the judging process works.

## **How did you promote collaboration among stakeholders which may include those having "Social objective", those motivated by "profit"?**

**Christelle-Elie Safi (MEL and CLA Team Lead, USAID WSC)** We had established solid relationships with our communities through our predecessor project, and they saw the results that were achieved by the predecessor project. We didn't face any reluctance from our stakeholders. We engaged with them at the beginning of WSC. They knew that we had to adapt, because when we first started WSC, we had a normal work plan with a main focus on enhancing wastewater of the water establishment, but with the crisis we had to quickly re-adapt our work plan to a crisis response work plan. We had the blessing of USAID, of course. Our stakeholders' needs also shifted, and we were flexible in addressing those needs. So first, they saw how we worked with them through our predecessor project, and second, they saw our flexibility. They were really motivated to collaborate with us, and especially in promoting our youth activities within their communities.

## **Are there any particular ways in which WSC or Data for Impact succeeded in leveraging various forms of support for CLA initiatives from your project COR/AOR? Or from others at USAID?**

**Camelia Gheorghe (Chief of Party, D4I)** In our case we are working very closely with the USAID Mission in Moldova. We have regular meetings, not only the monthly ones, but also any time when there is an opportunity, when there is a challenge, when there is a risk. We meet and discuss and prioritize and strategize. And this was really very helpful. We had evidence which we used to inform a good

explanation of how to go forward. Of course, there are things that are changing in the environment, in the context, in the policies of USAID, also in the policies of the government, in the internal policies of your company, in the internal, you know, makeup of the management structure of the project and the activities. We are operating as a cooperative agreement. And although we had a project description at the beginning, each year we provide annual work plans that are to be approved by the Mission and then the AOR in Washington, and in this way we were able to accommodate all the changes needed in this annual work plan. But the approval was not obtained just overnight. It was an entire process of working with the Mission, explaining things, strategising. I would also echo what Christelle said: Indeed, it is extremely important to build this mutual trust. All the time there will be people with different agendas, but what is really behind it? Maybe it is a lack of understanding. Maybe there is no common vision on the end result. So you really need to identify the shakers and movers and demonstrate success.

**Christelle-Eli Safi (MEL and CLA Team Lead, USAID WSC)** We had always established open channels of communication with USAID, especially our CO. They were really flexible. They were crisis oriented, because, as I said, our work plan 1st year, we had to be adapted to respond to the emerging needs of the water establishment. Our CO worked closely with us to integrate our process response action into our work plan. We live in a country that is a changing environment every day. We cannot just use what we promised in our proposal and what they are promised in their proposal throughout the 5 years without taking into account these changing factors. So really open channels, communications, transparency with USAID. They were really involved in every step of the way.

As I said at the beginning, WSC had a small grant component, but when we did these assessments, we saw the needs of this youth. A third of Lebanon's population is aged under 24. You cannot go and implement the water establishment without taking a look at their needs, without educating them. We use this evidence to create and to grow our grant program and to allocate 10% of our budget to the grant component of the project.

**Given your complex operating environments, what has been your approach to prioritization of activities? You have lots of different opportunities, how do you include your stakeholders in that process?**

**Camelia Gheorghe (Chief of Party, D4I)** We are implementing this project to serve communities, to serve the people in need. The resources are all the time limited. But it is just a matter of calling the team and discussing the top 3 priorities: Looking at the budget, then coming up with a proposal, discussing it with the government, presenting various options, and various scenarios. Engaging the government in this process, asking them to provide resources as well. You know that's very important, for the ownership is very important for the sustainability and also discussing with USAID, and not only

with the Mission, but also the USAID colleagues in the headquarters, who are also very, very supportive, paying visits to Moldova, providing advice, coaching us. So this is the way in which prioritizing is done.

But at the end of the day we think about what will be the impact on the child. When I'm working with the case managers, when I'm working with other professionals, I remind them to consider that the child is not a case. It is a child. We need to make sure that everything we do is done in the best interest of the child.

This also helps us prioritize things because there are many things to be done, but some of these actions could be done maybe next year, but there are more urgent ones now. So it is this kind of discussion, collaboration, brainstorming, expressing openly our ideas, you know, being honest about what we can, what we cannot deliver, consulting with internally in the team, but also in the company, also with USAID colleagues. Then going back to the government and looking at how they can get involved, how they can contribute their resources to do things better for the child, because the project is about harnessing the power of data for the benefit of the child, and he or she is the only one that matters in what we do.

It seems to be a rather abstract project, I mean data for impact. And many times we were asked: how could you use the data for the child? We've done many things, but also lately we produced a film in the form of a cartoon which is really, very, very easy to understand how data can save lives and can improve child outcomes. Winston mentioned statistics, research, evaluations, performance, monitoring assessments, etc. Evidence. And so what I mean is, how can you know all this makes a difference in the lives of children? And this is what our movie is about. And again coming back to your question about prioritizing. This is what matters. At the end the child.

**Christelle-Elie Safi (MEL and CLA Team Lead, USAID WSC)** We wanted to do the same as our predecessor project in engaging with youth, but not in the traditional way. So we went to the community. How can we do this? That was the idea that we prioritized: How can we reach more communities in different villages?

Camilla reminded me that we developed a mascot, a guy that's in the form of a reading meter, a water reading. So whenever we have students from schools conducting field trips to a wastewater treatment plant or to a water facility. We have the mascot there so really it stays in their mind. It stays that during that field trip there was this mascot, and I learned from him this and that.