



USAID
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

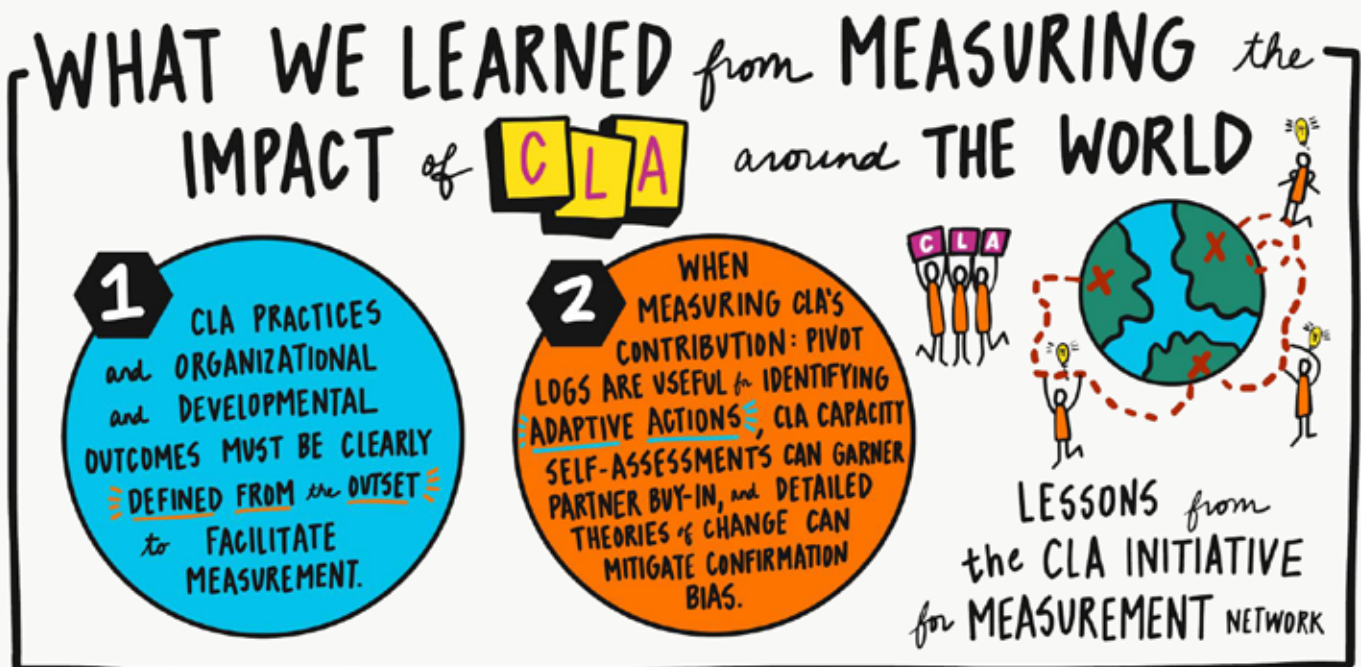


**EVIDENCE BASE
FOR CLA**

COLLABORATE • LEARN • ADAPT

COLLABORATING, LEARNING AND ADAPTING IMPACT MEASUREMENT LEARNING NETWORK

Findings on What to Expect When You Practice CLA



The USAID-funded Collaborating, Learning and Adapting Impact Measurement (CLAIM) Learning Network provided grants to five implementing organizations to support the development and sharing of innovative methods for measuring CLA's contribution to development outcomes.

Over an 18-month period, the five CLAIM grantees designed and conducted research agendas for seven development projects and met monthly to share promising CLA practices, address common challenges, and foster collective learning to expand CLA measurement, practice and evidence. The Learning Network's primary focus was on CLA measurement methodologies, but members also generated findings about CLA's contributions to organizational and development outcomes. This brief offers insights about what to expect when you invest in CLA.

When Practicing CLA

WHAT TO EXPECT	WHAT TO DO
<p>Turbulence in practicing CLA</p>	<p>Expect turbulence when your organization starts to practice CLA. Figuring out which CLA approaches and practices are most effective for creating a robust organizational learning dynamic can be a bumpy process. Each organization is different, constantly changing, and full of people who learn and contribute in a variety of ways. This is why CLA practices need to be tested and tailored to fit an organization before they can be useful.</p> <p>Organizations practicing CLA are likely to experience an ongoing process of learning and adapting: wrestling with imperfect information, challenging assumptions, and, as necessary, letting go of familiar initiatives in favor of new courses of action.</p>
<p>One size does not fit all</p>	<p>For some programs, effective CLA relies upon data-enabled rapid decision making, and this may require an organization to make greater investments in technology and analytical tools. For programs with intensive collaboration with external partners, project teams will need to focus on facilitating relationships, convening stakeholders, and flexibly marshalling resources.</p> <p>CLA and the organizational processes, operations systems, and culture that support CLA will (necessarily) vary depending on timeframe, resources, team members, project goals, and other unique factors specific to your effort. For example, a project that aims to improve agricultural supply chain management through increased actor coordination may adapt established contracting tools to include quarterly amendments which allow for more flexible partnerships with agri-businesses tailored to the goals, capabilities, and context of the local actor. This approach enables continuous integration of learning into project activities and goals. Once a project team has identified the approaches that make sense for their unique set of factors, they can adapt CLA tools and practices to their specific context, making investing in CLA more manageable and effective.</p>
<p>People will see that they are already doing it</p>	<p>When first learning about CLA, practitioners may ask: <i>“How is this different? We’ve always collaborated, learned, and adapted. That’s just good management!”</i> Our research suggests they may be right—to an extent. CLA looks like existing practices because it draws on decades of experience from organizational learning, knowledge management, and adaptive approaches. If it looks familiar, then we are on the right track.</p> <p>Reference and rely on this familiarity when promoting CLA. Connect CLA to what teams are already doing and build from there. By putting a holistic framework around existing practices, CLA creates a language for teams to discuss aspects of their approach that may not have been explicitly stated, or ways they can connect the “collaborating, learning, and adapting” practices they already use to work even more effectively and go deeper in their enabling environment. Practitioners may start to see their current efforts in a new light and leverage the CLA framework to identify gaps, barriers, and areas for improvement.</p> <p>You win over the <i>“we’re already doing this”</i> crowd when they see how the aspects of CLA they’re not yet practicing robustly can help to relieve organizational barriers and speed or deepen progress toward development goals.</p>

Take Aways

Putting CLA into practice requires constant navigation. Expect a dynamic process of finding which approaches fit your goals and context, often discarding or adjusting what worked in the past. Perhaps most importantly, CLA is not just about formal procedures or organizational infrastructure, but about people and how they work together. Start with where they are and bring them on board. CLA is a journey, not a destination.