

Collaborating, Learning and Adapting (CLA)

Supporting countries on their journeys
to self-reliance

In theory, high quality monitoring and evaluation (M&E) data give projects the information they need to make informed decisions. In practice, however, it can be challenging to capitalize on and meaningfully use these data to strategically inform project learning and adapting. *How have we addressed this challenge?*

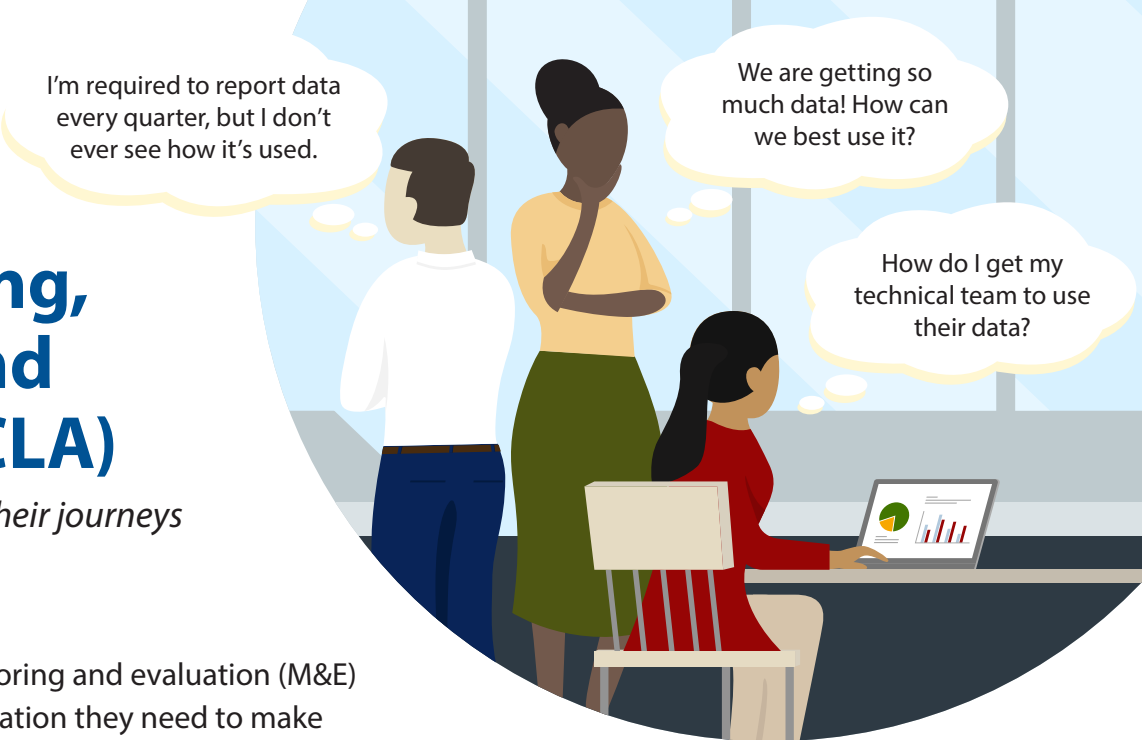
Using an intentional approach called **Collaborating, Learning and Adapting (CLA)**, we help stakeholders go beyond traditional M&E. CLA provides a framework for collaboration that translates M&E data to learning, and uses learning to improve project activities. The collaboration element is critical to ensure stakeholders understand the evidence behind project performance and support project planning decisions.

Our mission at **RTI International**—turning knowledge into practice—guides our project work. We empower local counterparts to analyze their own data, generate evidence, and adapt through learning.

Creating an organizational learning culture.

We believe that CLA is the responsibility of all staff, not just M&E specialists. Through our internal Monitoring, Evaluation, Research, Learning, and Adapting (MERLA) Community of Practice (CoP), we convene staff across sectors with the shared goal of institutionalizing a CLA culture and sharing practices across our development projects. The CoP has grown to **more than 70 members** representing diverse sectors, perspectives, and disciplines in our domestic and international offices.

The CoP increases knowledge dissemination across sectors and projects by hosting monthly pause-and-reflect sessions to share experiences, connecting through online platforms, identifying and using CLA tools and approaches, and participating in committees focused on specific aspects of CLA. We also host external learning events (recently in DC, the Philippines, and Uganda) bringing together representatives from the donor community, the private sector, and local governments, to share experiences in implementing dynamic learning and adapting models.



I'm required to report data every quarter, but I don't ever see how it's used.

We are getting so much data! How can we best use it?

How do I get my technical team to use their data?

Collaborating

The **USAID-funded Act to End NTDs | East program** supports Ministries of Health in 13 countries to eliminate and control neglected tropical diseases (NTDs). When developing its learning agenda, Act | East solicited input from multiple stakeholders, including eleven in-country teams, consortium partners, and the various teams at headquarters, in order to identify learning questions, themes, and activities. This collaborative process facilitated buy-in and engagement from all stakeholders involved, ensuring that the various priorities across the program were reflected in the learning agenda and enabling the project to use intentional learning to address knowledge gaps and inform evidence-based programmatic adaptation. Act | East also shared its draft learning agenda and development process with USAID and other USAID-funded NTD programs to facilitate cross-program learning.

Learning

The **USAID-funded Effective Water, Sanitation and Hygiene Services (E-WASH) program** works to improve urban water service delivery by strengthening the governance, financial, and technical viability of six state water boards in Nigeria. The E-WASH team conducted a baseline assessment in Taraba State to review the effectiveness of the state's WASH policy. The project conducted a study that identified major gaps in the existing WASH policy and institutional framework. A collaborative working group made up of staff from the Taraba State Water Supply Agency and Ministry of Water Resources used these findings to produce an amended draft of the policy, which was presented to the governor and signed into law. During the project's bi-annual pause-and-reflect workshop, teams from the five other states came together to learn from Taraba's success and adopt similar approaches to engage the government in using learning and evidence to address policy and institutional gaps. These improved policies will help create enabling environments for the state water boards to provide improved WASH services to the Nigerian people.

Adapting

The **USAID-funded Local Enterprise and Value Chain Enhancement (LEVE) program** in Haiti worked to stimulate job creation by expanding opportunities in the agribusiness, apparel, and construction sectors. Due to a constantly shifting socio-political environment, LEVE employed a system of adaptive management that shifted resources to the activities with the most promise. For example, LEVE supported a vocational school and several private sector welding firms in developing a welding training program with international certification by allocating funds to upgrade their physical infrastructure. After realizing that progress was stalling due to weak oversight by the school, LEVE allocated specialized management resources to try to resolve the problem. Although the project was able to complete its infrastructure work, progress continued to stall in achieving an internationally certifiable training program. Therefore, LEVE adapted and decided to reduce the objectives of the activity, reallocating almost 35% of the remaining funding to other activities.

More information:

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