Guidelines for promoting the Citizen-led Approach (CLA) to development

only the one sitting on the anthill
knows the ants are biting
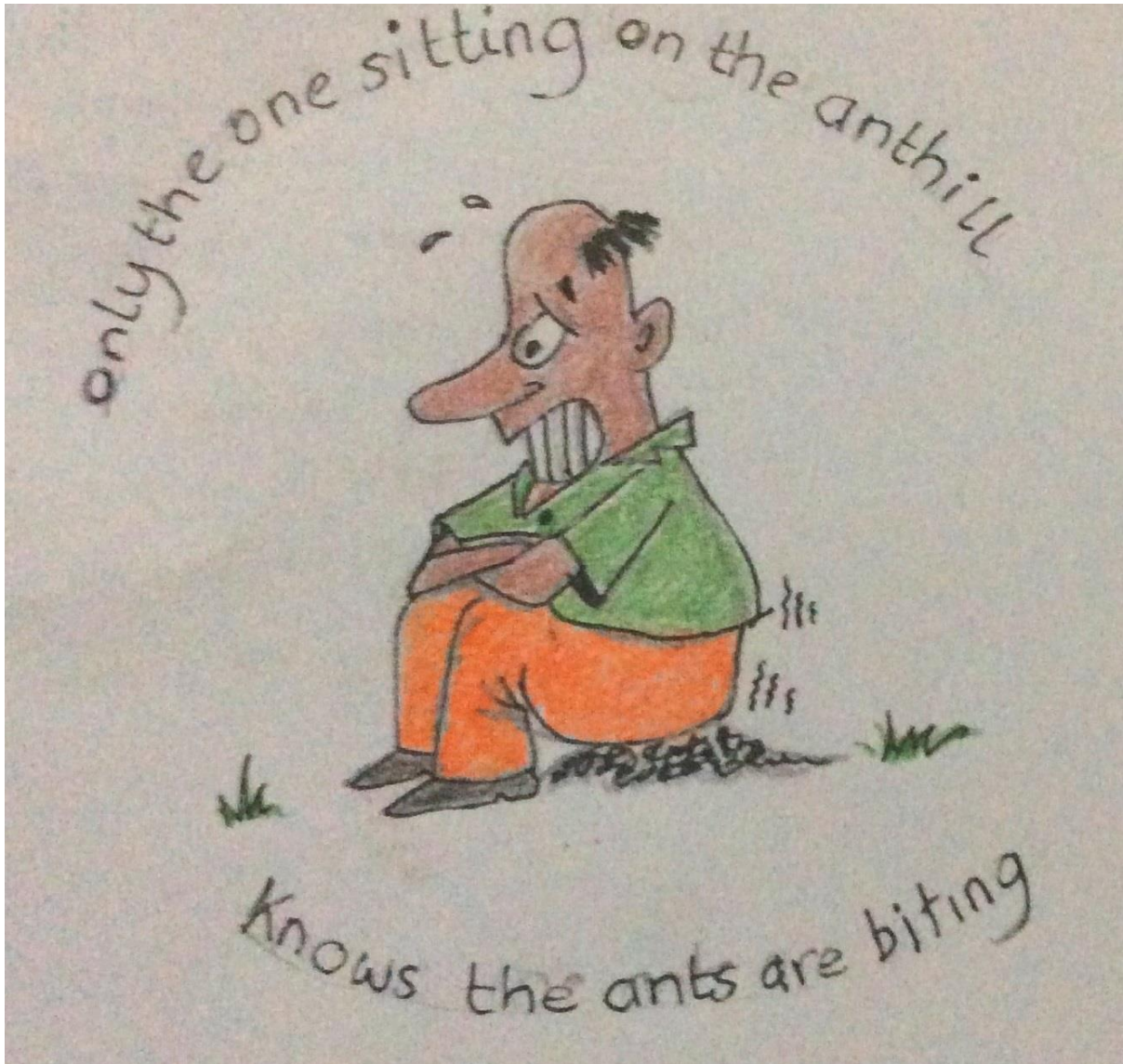
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June 2016

Acknowledgements

A 12 minute animated film entitled 'Citizen led Approach' accompanies these guidelines.

Contents

Glossary/Brief Definitions

ADC: Area Development Committees. Traditional Governance structures still operational in Malawi. ADCs operate below the DA (District Assemblies) as Traditional Authorities and consist of many villages. ADCsInt are headed by an elected leader.

CCJP: Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace. CCJP was founded in 1992 to promote awareness of human rights, justice and peace in the communities the church serves.

CHAM: Christian Health Association of Malawi (CHAM) is an association of Church-owned health facilities and training colleges in Malawi. CHAM is a key partner to the Government of Malawi through the Ministry of Health in implementing the Health Sector Strategic Plan. CHAM currently operates 180 health facilities and 12 training colleges located throughout the country that provide about 37% of health care and trains up to 80% of health workers in Malawi.

CSEC: The Civil Society Education Coalition (CSEC), set up in 2000, is a coalition of 81 diverse independent and voluntary organisations (non-governmental organisations, community-based organisations, trade unions and religious based organisations), which have come together in the pursuit of the right to quality education in Malawi. The coalition also established 27 District Education Networks that span across all the three regions to uphold the mandate of the CSEC at district level.

DHO: District Health Officer. A local Government representative in charge of implementation of the local health budget.

GHR: Governance and Human Rights Programme. This programme was developed by Trocaire in collaboration with local partners in 2006. First cycle lasted for three years (2006 – 2009). Since then, Trocaire supported a further three year cycle (up to 2012) and the actual five years programme (2012 – 2017). The main objectives of the programme are: (1) To ensure better social services for men and women as a result of strengthened local structures, (2) To promote the implementation of pro poor policies and practices by the Government, (3) To ensure target communities benefit from the achievement of objectives through improved programme management.

GIZ: Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit . The German Corporation for International Cooperation.

HFAC: Health Facility Advisory Committee. These are local community structures, set up by Government that act as a link between community members and health facilities. Their role is to monitor services provided by health centres and to advocate for improvements.

MHEN: Malawi Health Equity Network. MHEN was formed in 2000, as an independent alliance of organizations and individuals promoting equity and quality in health for all people in Malawi. The current membership is about 50 organizations, associations, coalitions, training institutions and health professionals

SMC: School Management Committees. These are local community structures, set up by Government, that act as a link between community members and schools. Their role is to monitor services provided by the schools and to advocate for improvements.
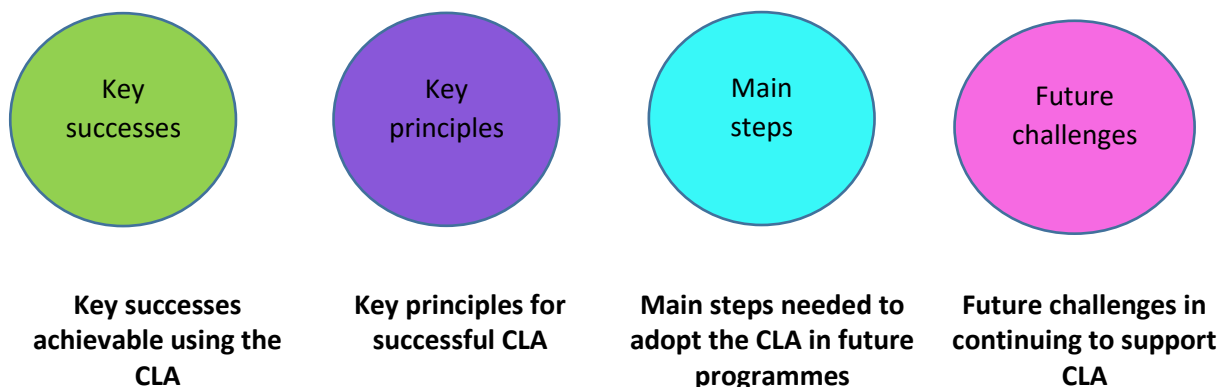
VDC: Village Development Committees, are traditional community governance structures still operating in Malawi under the ADCs and composed of community members. VDCs are represented by an elected leader.
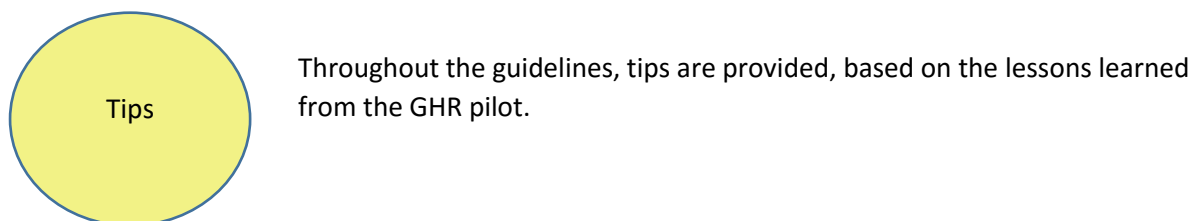
Introduction:

These Guidelines have been developed out of a review of the pilot Citizen-led approach (CLA) undertaken across the Governance and Human Rights (GHR) programme in Malawi. The GHR pilot took place over nearly 40 months starting in late 2012. The review which was carried out in March 2016 comprised joint reflection on and learning from the pilot through interviews and focus group discussions with those directly using the CLA as well as intermediaries (past and present staff of Trocaire partners) and Trocaire.

Trocaire has adopted a new strategic plan (2016-2020) with special emphasis on i. equitable access to and use of resources (specifically land and water natural resources as sources of food), ii. women's empowerment and iii. protection of human dignity in humanitarian crises. The Malawi Country Office unanimously endorses the CLA and wants to make sure that the principles and practice of CLA are embedded in future programmes in line with the new strategic plan even though the GHR programme comes to an end in 2017. The Guidelines are intended to help translate the lessons learned from the GHR pilot to the new areas of focus of the strategic plan.

The Guidelines provide an overview followed by documentation of the following;

Key successes	Key principles	Main steps	Future challenges
Key successes achievable using the CLA	**Key principles for successful CLA**	**Main steps needed to adopt the CLA in future programmes**	**Future challenges in continuing to support CLA**

The **key successes** are documented first in order to set the scene and provide the reader with confidence that this is a tried and tested approach. Following this, the **key principles** are laid out. CLA is not for every organisation or every type of project. This section and the first part (pre-CLA activities) of the following (main steps) section need to be understood carefully before embarking on CLA. The **main steps** section walks the reader through each step necessary to put in place a working CLA. Finally, the **future challenges** section identifies ways of integrating and improving CLA in programmes for the future.

Tips

Throughout the guidelines, tips are provided, based on the lessons learned from the GHR pilot.

Overview

What is CLA[1]?

CLA is 'just what it says on the tin' ….this is an approach to development which is **led by citizens themselves**. It differs from participatory planning, monitoring and evaluation which makes space for people to participate in a process which is essentially facilitated externally and feeds into a pre-determined programme or project evaluation framework. CLA, on the other hand, is driven primarily by **the needs of citizens themselves.** People define their own needs, describe their own desired futures, seek help in making change happen and identify and measure the success of this process of change themselves.

The CLA is an approach which permeates the entire development project or programme cycle and ensures that information is **generated by citizens themselves** and **used by citizens themselves.** Any other use of information generated is subordinate to this fundamental principle.

Relevance is widely regarded as one of five key criteria in assessing development programmes[2]. It should mean that development programmes address only what people themselves feel are **priorities.** Monitoring and evaluation should likewise be about tracking and measuring the change needed to address these priorities. As the proverb '*Only the one who is sitting on the anthill knows that the ants are biting'* used on the title page illustrates, a programme should be relevant to and defined by people themselves. And, **change** in terms of knowledge, values, behaviour, attitudes and practice is **best described by those directly experiencing that change**.

An important departure from other participatory processes used in development is that the emphasis in CLA lies in defining the **change that people want to see** and how **they will measure this change** while accepting that the means to actualise the change will be context specific, adaptive and flexible. As CLA is not so much focused on problems but rather on the **change that people want to see**, it provides opportunities for people to navigate different routes to achieve improvements in their lives. The onus of defining and tracking change is people's own and is based on the principle that if the monitoring and tracking of change is intrinsically useful to people themselves they will give it their **time and energy** so that the process is **likely to be sustainable** and ultimately **independent of the project**. By putting people in the driving seat we can fulfil the adage,

'Measure what's valued rather than value what's measured'

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[1] The CLA has been developed from a citizen led monitoring system developed for and used by a social movement in Bangladesh (Jupp and Ali, 2010).

[2] The other four are effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability, OECD DAC Principles for Evaluation of Development Assistance, Paris 1991.

Five steps to create the Heart of CLA

CLA comprises a package of **five essential steps** which together make up the CLA for citizen and community groups or the **heart of CLA**.

1 Gather statements about anticipated and desired change from citizens through a range of **informal participatory means**

2 Collate and validate these as '**people's indicators**' (the change that people want to see) across project locations,
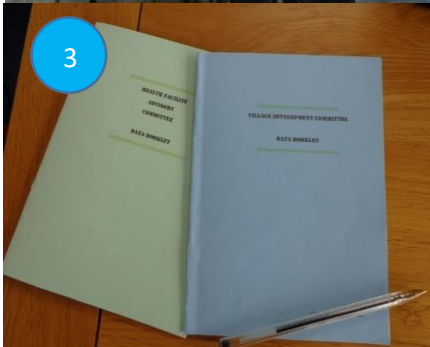
3 Develop **record booklets** with partners to collect data against these indicators.
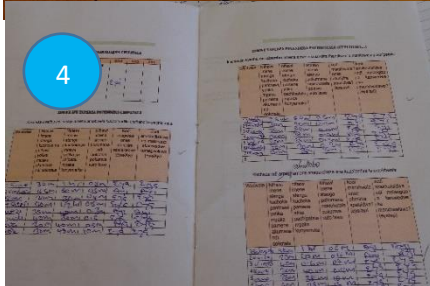
4 Citizens groups **collect their own data** regularly themselves,

5 Citizen groups **use the data** for their own planning, and advocacy.

The process taking place at community level is the **heart of CLA** and will be able to sustain on its own. It will continue to beat after removal of external support. External support is needed **to set up** the CLA and **to use** the CLA initially. These activities provide reporting and steering opportunities from the programme perspective during the funded period as the diagram below indicates.
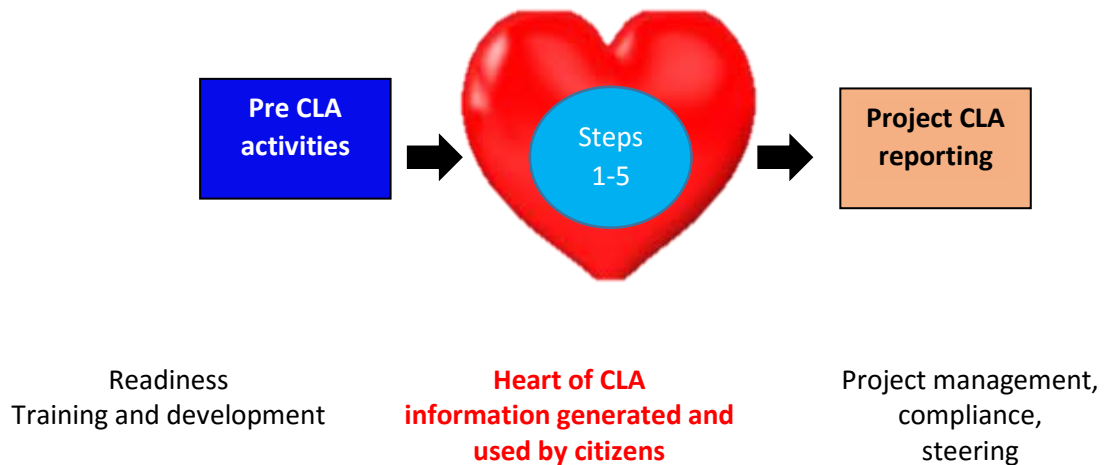
The heart within the full CLA process

| Readiness
Training and development | **Heart of CLA
information generated and
used by citizens** | Project management,
compliance,
steering |

CLA enables citizens and citizens' groups to have the **confidence** and **evidence** to take action, challenge, confront, laud and celebrate policy and practice done in their name. It leads to;

- more **empowered** citizens and citizens' groups, able to exercise their own agency and act independently (power devolved to them)

- programme indicators which are highly **relevant** to the programme beneficiaries since they have been identified by them as ones which matter (of value to them)

- enhanced **accountability and transparency** at citizen level.

Key successes

It worked!

*'the booklet system put in place.... has equipped committees with **a very important management tool**, enabling them to exercise strategic monitoring and advocacy'* (Independent Mid Term Evaluation, 2015, p30)

This section outlines some of the key successes achieved with the CLA in the Governance and Human Rights (GHR) programme in Malawi in order to set the scene and provide the reader with confidence that this is a tried and tested approach. Two main areas of success of the CLA have been in **improving frontline services** and **improving the confidence and capacity of community committees/citizens' groups.** Examples of improved health and education outcomes are provided to illustrate the first type of success and examples from Village Development Committees as well and health and education committees are used to illustrate the second.

It worked to improve frontline services....

The CLA worked well for the **Health Facility Advisory Committees** (HFAC). These are committees of citizens and health staff instituted by the Ministry of Health, Government of Malawi to facilitate Health Facility user and provider interaction. The informal participatory process run in communities (step 1) prior to developing the CLA record booklets for HFAC indicated that the **key pressing concerns** for people attending health facilities **at that time** were i. long waiting times for out-patients, ii. inadequate provision of drugs, iii, poor listening by health workers and unclear instructions for taking medicines, iv. frustrations with service provision leading to verbal and physical abuse by both health workers and patients and their families, v. late opening of out-patient clinics (and no displayed information about opening times). These issues were all regarded as requiring urgent change. Change statements were generated and monitoring measures were included in a specially designed CLA record booklet.

'(CLA) supported health centres work better, particularly because of the better relations between the service providers and communities, better understanding and sharing responsibilities'

DHO Ntchisi (noted in Mid-term Evaluation Report p17)

Various internal and external evaluations of change carried out since the CLA started, note the following changes in behaviour at Health Facilities (even at the most problematic Health Facilities[3]) as a result of the regular monitoring by HFAC using the booklets:

- improved relations between the health service providers and community; a shift from mutual blaming to working co-operatively to solve problems as a result of better understanding of the problems and issues faced by both sides.
- health service providers and community jointly monitor medical drugs supply and make joint appeals to District Health Office (DHO) and central medical stores
- active lobbying for more health staff
- reduction in theft from and vandalism of health facilities

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[3] DHO purposely allocated some of the most difficult Health Facilities to MHEN, where, for example, serious cases of physical abuse had taken place

- improved mediation of patient complaints with increased understanding and evidence of constraints service providers face in carrying out their duties
- more reliable health facility opening hours[4]
- more privacy in medical consultations
- more understanding among patients and their families about why patients with more critical ailments received more time and attention than those with less serious ailments
- In CHAM facilities which require payment for services, HFAC helped identify and follow up with defaulters

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Drug monitoring using the CLA.

The informal participatory process run prior to developing the CLA revealed that a major concern was the poor supply of essential drugs to Government Health Facilities with complaints of 'stock outs' and suspicions of malpractice. The CLA included simple means for the committee to check and record drug supplies using the CLA booklet.

HFACs shared they were a little nervous at first joining the health staff to monitor the delivery of drugs. But they soon regularly attended when the trucks arrived with the supplies. At first health workers saw this as 'policing' and withheld information. But as time went on, rather than resenting their presence, the health workers came to like the HFAC being there so that the community stopped accusing them of stealing the drugs when stocks ran short. The HFAC records were an independent verification that sometimes drugs were not available, were delivered in insufficient quantities or were returned because they were 'date expired'. Armed with their own recorded information the HFACs were able to pacify the community and build greater support for the Health Facility.

The HFAC and health workers now see that they are *'both on the same side'* and checking drug deliveries '*is a partnership'*.

'After just 8 months of trialling the CLA, the DHO asked us to scale up to include other Health Facilities and the DHO mobilised their own resources to train 15 more HFACs…..

Soon after, GIZ provided funds for training in CLA for 21 HFACs…..

CHAM asked us to provide training and CLA booklets to their other Health Facilities which were not part of the pilot.'
MHEN Coordinator

The CLA was also used by **School Management Committees** (SMCs). SMCs comprise community members and parent teacher associations and have been instituted by Government of Malawi since the 60s. The informal participatory process run in communities (step 1) prior to developing the CLA record booklets for SMCs highlighted the key issues in their areas as i. student attendance irregular and particularly poor on rainy days, ii. poor teacher attendance as well as lateness and leaving early, iii. little known about the school improvement grants (both amount and timing), iv. learning resources often late and inadequate quantities, v. teacher salaries paid late, vi. little transparency about the use of the development funds collected from each student. The CLA record booklets were designed to provide a means to monitor the change people wanted to see and enabled SMCs to review and take action.

SMCs used the CLA successfully to;

- reduce teacher absenteeism and improve punctuality[5]

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[4] At very least, explanations provided through messengers if the health workers could not arrive in time rather than leaving people waiting.
[5] Head teachers liked the co-operation of the SMC in checking this as they cannot always be there themselves.

- reduce student absenteeism (employing a more conciliatory and less confrontational approach to encouraging students back to school through home visits)
- improve school resource management
- improve community participation by ensuring parents were informed on development funds and their use which, in turn, motivated them to take part
- improve school enrolment
- advocate for increase in numbers of teachers
- point out that the teachers who were most often late were the ones living in teacher houses

It worked to improve the confidence and capacity of the committees…..

The CLA was adopted by **Village Development Committees** (VDCs) in two different programmes; one intending VDCs to be capacitated to monitor local budget expenditures and advocate for budget reform and the other with a specific focus on advocating for an inter-district road (see Tip 1). External factors prevailing in Malawi at the time of the pilot inhibited progress with using the CLA booklets for advocacy purposes but the booklets were successfully used to **monitor and improve the committees themselves**.

'The booklets made the VDC think through their roles whereas if it had just been ToRs they would have just accepted them without understanding'

Former CCJP programme officer

Tip 1
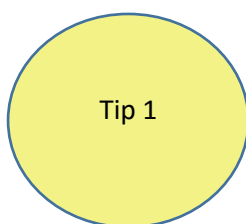
CCJP introduced the CLA for the Village Development Committees in Zomba which were focused on advocating for a key new district road. The concerns about the lack of this road voiced during the informal participatory process (step 1) included i. we cannot get our pregnant women to hospital in time, ii. it takes too long to get to their preferred health service providers, iii. it takes too long to get to banks and markets, iv. transport costs are too high, v. prices of basic goods (soap, salt, cooking oil, paraffin oil) are higher than in town, vi. lower qualified teachers only are attracted to difficult-to-reach areas, teacher turnover is very high and women teachers do not like to stay. Their CLA record booklet included ways to collect data on travel times, prices and school teacher turnover and **were used effectively as evidence in their advocacy**. However, **local interest waned** to continue to collect data when the progress of the decisions on the road were politicised and embroiled in national scandals outside of their influence . **Lesson learned: the CLA process should not be confined to a single advocacy outcome. It would have been better to have included other priorities in the programme where achievements could have been made.**

The informal participatory process (step 1) run ahead of developing CLA record booklets for VDCs highlighted the following concerns at that time; i. VDCs were not necessarily comprised of elected

members and yet people felt that the VDC works best when they are elected, ii. a lack of autonomy in the VDCs with the feeling that they were often co-opted by external projects and sub-ordinate to committees set up by external projects for particular needs, iii. little confidence to raise issues with District Authorities, iv. village plans were actually only lists of development priorities required from Area Development Committees (ADC) rather than something for the village itself and they did not keep copies or feel able to follow up with the ADC. The VDC CLA record booklets were designed to track these issues so that the VDC themselves would be able to assess change.

'The VDCs had to collect information for themselves. They felt that they were active and appreciated. They felt empowered. It was very symbolic that they were 'holding the book'.'

Former programme officer, CCJP

VDCs used the CLA successfully to;

- hold regular elections and increase the relative numbers of elected versus co-opted committee members
- increase representation of women on the committee and encourage them to take up leadership positions
- recognise their oversight role over other village committees
- formalise village planning processes and follow up on these
- always take minutes in meetings

Secretaries of VDCs commented that the booklets made sure that they recorded information about the VDC which had not been recorded before. This data *'was more meaningful than opinion or memory'*.

Similarly, SMCs and HFACs, which also used their booklets to monitor and improve the working of their committees, described a range of other benefits of using the CLA to track changes in their own committees' capacity and effectiveness including

- more regular meetings
- regular numerical records
- have data to back up their claims
- sharing the booklets with parents (SMCs)
- made us more active –because there were always actions to follow up
- *gave us credibility in the community as they know we are collecting data*.
- provided a platform for heads of facilities and the SMCs/HFACs *'to become partners'*

*'It (the booklet) reminds us what we have to do '*

HFAC secretary
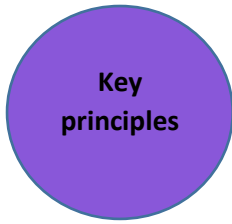
Key principles

An internalisation of **Key Principles** (non-negotiables) by projects intending to adopt CLA is essential. These Guidelines have drawn on lessons learned from the pilot. They have been purposely kept simple.

1. Rights-based programmes do not follow linear predictable patterns. People become interested in exercising their rights when they understand the extent to which these are denied and the impact of that denial on their daily lives. Inevitably this will not be felt in the same way by everyone everywhere. As it cannot be predicted what interests people and galvanises them to action it is very difficult for a rights based programme to fix specific indicators which will be monitored to the exclusion of ones which may emerge over the life of the project as more important. Progress in realisation of rights will move at a different pace, in a different direction in different contexts. This means the first and, arguably, most important principle is **flexibility.** This means that project frameworks, indicators, payments by results must accommodate sufficient flexibility to enable people to pursue the issues which matter to them most.

2. Project staff must **walk the talk of community empowerment**. This means being a **facilitator or catalyst** of change processes **not** an implementer. It means continuously reflecting on our own behaviour and attitudes in our day to day work and interactions with communities. It means letting community take the lead, for example responding to their invites to their meetings not the other way around. It means letting them own and brand their own resources and processes. It means accompanying them at their pace and in the direction they feel is most important.

3. A CLA orientation, therefore means that we should value only **people's indicators** of success. This may be a challenge as projects, programmes and strategies often prescribe normative indicators. There is no compromise here. If we impose our indicators and evaluation frameworks the CLA cannot work as it depends on people seeing relevance and mobilising around things that matter and are of priority to them.

4. Only those indicators which are currently **useful and relevant** for people themselves to track should be included in the CLA. This means prioritising based on what people themselves consider important and urgent not what we might think are important and urgent.

Projects often collect too much data. This does not galvanise action or inspire people-it just becomes a drudgery. When people collect information on what matters to them, they feel energised to do so. **Lesson learned: measure only what is valued don't value what is measured,**

Tip 2
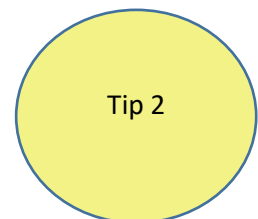
5. There must be **local level structures (citizen groups)** comprising ordinary people in place which can own and manage the CLA. Preferably these should be elected bodies with accountability to their electorates, e.g. VDCs. Members can be selected providing they have the backing and recognition of the community, e.g. Star Circles. The bodies must have a legitimacy in the community but do not necessarily have to have a legal identity.

It is always better to work with existing groups rather than create new ones. Existing groups, even if they are not working very well, are often embedded in the community and respected. Creating new groups undermines the role of the existing groups. The CLA process provides a rallying point even for moribund committees. **Lesson learned: work with existing groups wherever possible.**

Tip 3

6. But having local structures/citizens groups does not mean that they alone are responsible for the CLA. These structures need to embrace the principle **that all voices matter** and that they must be inclusive of multiple perspectives and realities in the communities they represent in their planning, monitoring, evaluation and advocacy activities.

7. Emphasis on **downward accountability** rather than upward accountability. The local structures/citizen groups undertake CLA for their own benefit and the benefit of their community. They need to feel and respond to the demands for accountability from below not from higher level structures or the project. (To reinforce this, the project also needs to be aware if its own obligation to be accountable to these local level structures)

8. CLA is **not suitable for a programme with a single advocacy aim** such as advocating for the district road (see Tip 1). Such programmes are extremely sensitive to factors outside the control of the local level structures.

9. Embed **continuity** of the CLA from the start. The CLA must be owned by the community not imposed from outside. Resources used should be replicable by being easily locally sourced and locally managed. Ensure that the local structures have institutional legitimacy so that they will continue in the future.

Main steps
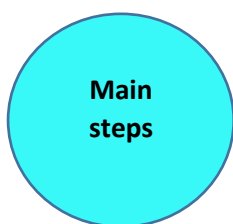
This section details the steps which must be taken to implement CLA firstly as a tool for empowerment of the local structures/citizens groups and secondly as a means to capture relevant evidence of project and programme progress.

| Pre CLA activities | → | **Steps 1-5** | → | Project CLA reporting |
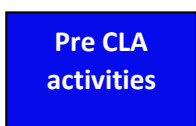
Pre CLA activities

The project (INGO and local partners) needs to reflect on its suitability and readiness to adopt a CLA orientation. As mentioned above it is not appropriate for all organisations or all issues. Some of the following pre-CLA activities could be undertaken within collaborative workshops led by the INGO.

Readiness of the project

➢ Reflect on the **readiness of all the partners to embrace CLA**. This step requires honesty and reflexivity. Undertake a participatory review of staff attitudes and behaviour towards a genuine orientation to community empowerment. Determine the level of support of the partner/project leadership as this is critical. Carefully select CLA facilitators ('the CLA facilitator team'). Recognising that Malawian organisations typically experience high staff turnover, especially of young staff, select more than you need.

This may sound funny but it works. Take potential members of the CLA facilitator team out to lunch and observe how they treat the servers to give you a good idea how they conduct themselves and respect and empower others. Where there are deeply ingrained power distances, you may need to reconsider adopting the CLA or you may need to facilitate participatory workshops aimed at understanding power dynamics and attitudes and behaviour needed to reduce power gaps. **Lesson learned: disempowering oneself is a key means to empower others**.

Tip 4
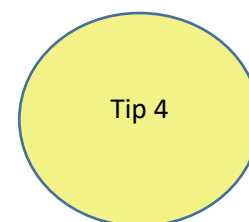
➢ Ensure that the **donor for the project is supportive** of the CLA and understands the implications for programming. Ensure there will be enough 'wiggle room' for responsive activities and flexibility required by a process which is endogenously driven.

➢ **Orient the finance staff** on your intentions to introduce CLA and insist on the use of outcome budgeting rather than output budgeting . **Secure a specific budget line for CLA activities**.

- **Identify the local structures/citizens groups** which will implement the CLA. Understand their structure and whether this enables or constrains their ability to undertake CLA, e.g. CHAM HFACs were chaired by the Catholic Father or Mother Superior and so committee members did not feel able to speak freely. MHEN suggested that their role changed from Chair to ex-officio advisor and this worked. Similarly, HFACs were politicised and un-elected so MHEN campaigned to change the constitutions to ensure that members should be elected. Encourage young people to be part of the citizens groups.

Tip 5
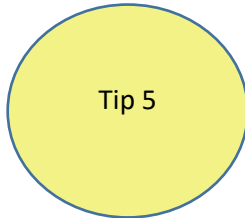
CLA facilitators may be project staff but also consider government staff as potential facilitators (e.g. MHEN worked with District trainers to roll out the programme.)
Lesson learned: Involving the right Government staff as much as possible can embed the CLA and contributes to sustainability of the CLA

- Start **building interest in the CLA with relevant Government structures**, by sharing your aspirations and working with local structures which are embedded as far as possible in institutional systems.

- Identify **a lead CLA process facilitator**. This person must have a good understanding of community empowerment and use of creative participatory methods to engage and energise people and will act as an advisor and mentor across projects to provide guidance and quality assurance in implementation of the approach.

Training and development of staff

- Build the capacity of the CLA facilitator team by letting them **learn by doing**. Drop them individually into an immersive experience, e.g. staying with a farmer family for a couple of nights and helping in the field, spending an entire day in a school sitting in the back of the class as a student, staying with a committee member for a couple of nights and understanding what their job entails, or spending an entire day and evening in a village 'hanging out' having informal conversations and listening to people (without taking any notes!). The idea of this is to challenge their assumptions about people living in poverty, to gain insights from '*being in their shoes'* and to practice disempowering themselves as they are learners in these unfamiliar environments.

- After returning from the field, encourage the CLA facilitator team to discuss what they have learned about themselves and the people they have interacted with. This works well in a workshop setting. Encourage them to share activities they undertook in the field (threshing, weeding, collecting water, playing soccer with school children) that they have never done before and reveal insights they had never had before. This process reaffirms their role as **learners**, necessary to facilitate the next steps

'We usually start from theoretical perspectives but here we started with a blank slate….. At times we were confused, unsure, out of comfort zones, had moments of anxiety at doing something different….But in the end this learning process was transformational'.

CLA Facilitator, GHR pilot

Steps 1-5

The heart of CLA: The CLA facilitator team is now ready to facilitate the set up of the CLA which the community groups will eventually manage entirely by themselves. The following five step process enables this.

Step 1 informal participatory process to gather change statements

➤ The CLA facilitator team plans together the process for gathering change statements, asking themselves; where will we go? Whom will we interact with? How will we help people to feel relaxed and open up?

➤ Take the CLA facilitator team to the field to **listen** to a range of people explain their aspirations and their hopes for change. These are people who are affected by the issues at stake as well as those belonging to citizen's groups which may be responsible for CLA. Encourage the team to use a mix of ways to get people to open up and express themselves freely. This might include informal conversations, use of drama, use of debates, drawing pictures or taking photos as described below.

Tip 6

The whole point of these listening exercises is to ensure that people are relaxed and feel they can express what they really feel. Conventional ways of interacting with people in villages involve pre-planned 'show and tell' (e.g. a visit to a model farm, a working irrigation system) questionnaires, interviews or formal events where people feel awkward to open up, feel judged by their peers and the outsiders and provide guarded answers or ones they hope will please. **Creative processes** work because people relax, often are able to express their feeling through the medium they are using and can be fun or at least rewarding to be part of. **Lesson learned: people tell you want they think you want to hear so make the participatory process something for them not for us.**

Some informal creative participatory approaches to try out

Informal conversations	Leave the vehicle outside the village and walk in on foot. Go on your own. No project logos, no project identifiers, no notebook. Just you as 'Wesi' or 'Martin' or 'Andrew'.
	Engage people you meet, sharing 'chit chat'. Introduce yourself as someone from the city who knows little about village life. Be interested in learning from them about the village and about them. Share things about yourself that you have in common , such as liking football, being a mother, feeling hot.
	'Hang out', move around, chat to different people of different ages.
	Ask them to tell you what's good about the village and village life. Then ask them what's less good. Use the opener 'tell me about….' rather than direct what, why, how questions.
	Make sure it remains a conversation not an interview. So, for example, *'you were saying that the rains are late this year, other places I have been to are struggling too, I am having real problems in my own garden tell me what it is like for you?'*

	Talk about their dreams and hopes for positive change but also their concerns and worries about negative change.
Drama	You can work directly with local structures/citizens groups. Ask for some time within their usual meetings rather than setting up a special event. No need for any formality-it can be outside under a tree without chairs!
	Following warm up (song, energiser, light hearted introductions), introduce the idea of creating short dramas to illustrate future change.
	Good to create two groups; one will depict positive change and another negative change.
	e.g. *'imagine we could whisk you forward in time by five years and show in the drama what farming is like now. What has changed?'*
	Leave them alone to develop their dramas. Get them to perform their short dramas to each other.
	Pick out and discuss further some of the key changes they identified.
pictures	Even adults like to create pictures if given enough encouragement. Organise impromptu art sessions with people under a tree, bus shelter, bar.
	Provide lots of coloured pens, pencils, coloured paper to cut out, other decorative items to stick.
	e.g. *'create pictures of the future where things are better than they are now in relation to people's relationships with each other or where things have changed for the worse.'*
	Give people time to create and then organise a gallery where people can see each other's creations and identify common themes about desired and undesired anticipated change.
debates & discussions	Organise impromptu discussion sessions (avoid pre-arrangements which are constrained by formalities). Start with a general discussion about what concerns people.
	Ask them to imagine change around these concerns and identify opposite opinions and positions on this.
	Form groups which will develop their perspectives of positive or negative change and will then pitch these to each other in a traditional debate style.
photos	Hand over your camera or tablet to people you meet and ask them to take pictures of what they like and what they don't like, e.g. about farming.
	Walk with them as they search out suitable illustrative photos and explore why they like or dislike.
	Pass round the photos and get others to discuss and expand on the issues.

In all of the suggested creative activities above, the facilitator merely outlines the idea and then lets the **group explore the issues by themselves**. People sometimes need a little encouragement but when we did these activities in the GHR CLA process, we were surprised how people really engaged and enjoyed them but also how detailed and revealing they were.


Getting into the drama….

Step 2: developing people's indicators

➢ As soon as possible after facilitating these creative sessions, convene a workshop where the CLA facilitators share with each other all the **statements of change** which emerged from these sessions. These are recorded (usually on a computer) as team members share from their notes made of the informal participatory process.

Statements of change are positive or negative statements which have been made by people themselves in conversations, debates, dramas or through explaining their pictures and photos. They must NOT be interpretations of these. Every single statement is noted even if it appears to repeat others. This is to get a sense of the generalizability of some sentiments but also because there may be nuances inherent in the way people say things. Sources must be carefully noted by gender, approximate age and livelihood (e.g. farmer (m 30s), market vendor (f 50s)). Make sure the language of the change statements is true to what was actually said. **Lesson learned: record everything you hear in the way it was said even if you think it is repetition.**

Tip 7
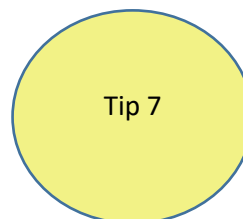
Sort the change statements (there may be hundreds and a software package such as Nvivo may help but it can also work well just cutting out each statements with scissors and placing

them in piles of similar ideas). Review which change statements are often made and are important to people? Identify the key issues which concern people.

➤ **Undertake a validation process** by going back to the groups involved in generating the change statements, the wider community or other groups and ask them *'this is what you told us was important, are we correct?'* This is important but can also be viewed as time consuming, so it may also be possible to do this with local partners.

1sorting change statements by making piles of similar statements
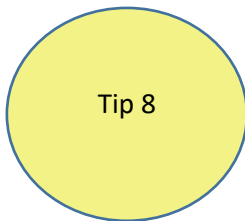
Tip 8

Negative statements are just as important as positive ones because these give rise to the idea that the groups may need to gather data as evidence of negative consequences of interventions or negative trends so that they can take action to mitigate these (e.g. banning children from school who didn't pay their development fee became an issue in some schools which needed action to address). Look for change statements that show a change in behaviour not just numbers e.g. not just more women on committees but change statements that suggest they are pro-active, in leadership positions, contributing actively. **Lesson learned: take time to craft the statements that will be used in the CLA booklets and make sure they are measuring the right things.**

➤ Turn these into appropriate indicators (in simple form) and infer what might be measured to track change. These are '**people's indicators'.**

Step 3: Develop record booklets

These are for the citizens' groups to collect their own data around these change statements/'people's indicators'. These record booklets must be simple to use and cheap to reproduce (as we found everyone in the committees/group wanted their own copy, even if at times they did not fully understand or had poor literacy skills)

'There is very strong ownership (of the booklets). *I visited a group and met a woman holding on to her booklet. 'It so priceless' she said, 'I won't let anyone take it away'.*

Trocaire Programme officer

Tip 9
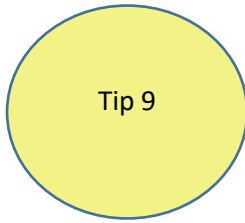
Feedback from different groups using the booklets suggests i. booklet size and font size needs to be large (although some liked that it was pocket-sized and easy to carry about), ii. needs plenty of space to fill in the tables, iii. arithmetic calculations need to be made easy, iv. a need to include space to add new activities and new items to monitor, v. translations must be careful and faithful to the originals, vi. booklets are preferred to files. Committee members range from relatively uneducated who have literacy limitations to educated persons so it is important to make the books user-friendly for all. The review of the GHR pilot has indicated that more use of graphics and pictures would help**. Lesson learned: Offer alternative formats for the booklet and let the local structures /citizen groups choose and individualise.**

*'We promised the SMCs that the booklets were **theirs** and we would never come to take them. When we needed data we only took copies. It was important that the booklets had no branding on- people felt they really were theirs.'*

Former CSEC programme officer

Step 4: Citizens' groups collect their own data
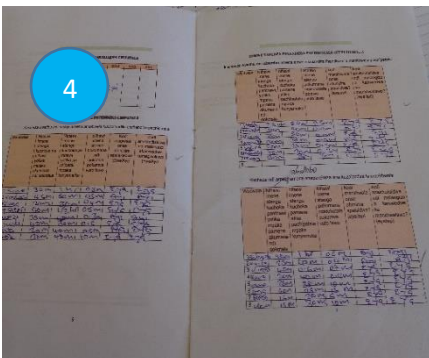
➢ **Local structures/citizens groups use the booklets** to record their data and use these to inform their own action plans as well as the action plans for the facility (e.g. school, health facility, market). It is helpful if the collection of data by the local structures/citizens groups fits with the cycles of data collection by other stakeholders where appropriate e.g. HFACs collect monthly data to feed into the district health reporting schedule.

'Just having the booklets and the health workers knowing we were watching them, changed things. They apologised if they were late, were less rude with patients and gave them more time. We sometimes don't fill in the booklet truthfully and give them the benefit of the doubt, so the record is good. But they know we are watching, that is the thing.'

HFAC member

SMCs and HFACs both noted some hesitation when they first started to use their record booklets. They were concerned, *'we might get this wrong'*. Some CLA facilitators suggested they used pencil to fill in the tables at first. SMC members said *'we were scared doing this monitoring. The teacher is the boss so to criticise timeliness or drop outs was a challenge'*. Similarly, HFAC said '*we might be thought of as police'* but with the support of the CLA facilitators who reminded them *'this is your responsibility'* they soon accepted this. **Lesson learned; provide plenty of encouragement in the early stages and it will take time to get going.**

Tip 10

Tip 11
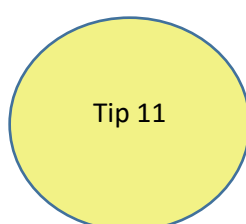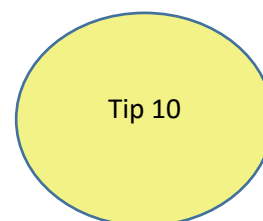
CSEC provided incentives for achievement against some of the indicators included in the CLA record booklets, such as small grants for the school which had a well-functioning SMC or had successfully reduced student drop-out. The incentives were given on the basis that the booklets provided 'trusted and transparent' evidence. However, carefully consider the pros and cons of this. It may be construed as promoting upward accountability and recognition rather than achievements which the community itself should endorse and laud. It may also affect the willingness to continue collecting data when the incentives are removed. **Lesson learned: consider the pros and cons of incentivising CLA based on the principle of empowering the community**.

'(With the booklets), *it gave the HFACs a reason to go to management to discuss issues'*

MHEN Pogramme Officer

Tip 12
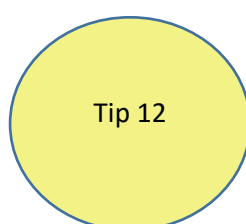
The CLA process must primarily be owned by the local structures/citizen's groups but this also requires 'buy in' and capacitation of the project intermediary organisation. The GHR programme relied too heavily on their own programme officers making this happen. Projects must not only support the CLA but must be prepared to put sufficient resources into supporting it. This also means that Trocaire must have efficient systems to transfer financial resources to partners in a timely way. **Lesson learned: train and resource projects sufficiently so that the CLA is not promoted and co-ordinated by Trocaire but by the partner project staff themselves**.

Step 5; Citizens' groups use their data

➤ **CLA facilitators support the local structures/citizens' groups** for the first year in helping them to use the data collected in the booklets. This means attending their usual meetings (not calling them to meet you) and encouraging analysis and discussion around the data they have collected and the actions they propose to take. Over time this mentoring support should lessen so that the local structure/citizens group takes the lead in doing these analyses and deliberations. CLA facilitators may also act as a bridge between the local structures and sub-national structures (where these exist) initially, providing information on opportunities to engage in advocacy and lobbying. But this role should also be devolved to the local structures and the sub-national structures as soon as possible to avoid dependency on the project.

Examples of CLA data use by local structures/citizens' groups

Data collected	Advocacy statement generated	Possible Action
SMC undertakes spot checks on different days of the week, noted if the teachers were present/absent in the classroom and if they arrived more than 15 minutes late or left more than 1 hour early.	'*This typical week, (total number) teaching days were lost due to absence of teachers. More than (total number) hours of student contact time was lost because teachers were late or left early.*'	SMC uses this data to discuss with the Head Teacher. SMC has own discussions about what to do about the problems SMC raises the issues with the Primary Education Advisors
HFAC undertakes exit interviews randomly among people attending out-patients to establish how long they waited, time they spent with the health worker, whether they got the drugs they needed and whether they understood the directions for use.	'*on the day of our spot check the minimum waiting time to see a health worker was (insert) and it took some patients (insert) hours to complete their visit to the health facility. The average time given to listen to patients was (insert) minutes. % received the needed medicines and % said they had clear instructions on how to take the medicines*'	HFAC uses this data to discuss with the health staff at the facility. HFAC has own discussions about what to do about the problems. HFAC raises these issues with the District Health Office.
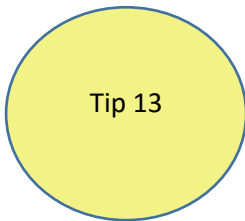
Tip 13

The CLA is premised on the fact that people become interested in exercising their rights when they understand the extent to which these are denied and the impact of that denial on their daily lives (see Key Principles).This means that over time the citizens groups will feel they have made achievements and that it is no longer necessary to monitor some indicators and they will want to galvanise around another challenge or change they want to see. The CLA process should accommodate these new priorities and the record booklets should have space or otherwise be able to include new pages**. Lesson learned: recognise and accommodate citizens' groups interest to monitor new things. The booklet is for them not the project**

➤ Having a number of citizens' groups actively collecting information provides an important opportunity for collation of the information for **advocacy purposes** above purely local level. Some citizen's groups are part of federated structures. Local community structures elect or send representatives to area or district level structures and these, in turn may have national bodies. MHEN assisted HFACs to combine information to influence planning and practice of the local DHO level. Again the principle of CLA should be maintained whereby people are encouraged to present their own information directly rather than through external mediation.

➤ As well as collating information and facilitating action at local and district levels, the information can also be used at **national level for advocacy purposes**. For example, MHEN took up a number of issues including that non-essential drugs were being delivered to Health Facilities rather than essential ones and that the expiry dates on some drugs supplied to Health Facilities were out of date.   These issues were highlighted in the news media and in various health forums. Similarly CSEC publicised the poor teacher pupil ratio data generated by CLA on TV and in the news media. In both cases, the organisations found that knowing that the data had been generated by communities, policy makers took special attention as they knew they would be quizzed about these issues on their community visits. Both organisations say that they have seen a change in their respective Ministries attitudes since bringing the information generated by CLA to their attention. Whereas before the Ministries would hardly acknowledge their phone calls or letters, they are now more responsive because of the community involvement in generating the data.

MHEN found that Government became very open to discussions because they *'knew we had the evidence and that it came **from people themselves**…. They knew that if they checked with the communities the communities would speak out…. Over time they actively called us for information…. Even the Minister said 'We don't hear this but you hear the real issues' while before they did not even acknowledge our letters'*
(MHEN Project Officer)

Tip 14

Even though the project may see opportunities for advocacy beyond the local level, they must not (even inadvertently) cut the communities which generated their own data out of this process. The data is 'people's data' and must be presented as such, acknowledged and promoted as raising issues which are most important to people. It is also important that the project feeds back directly to communities any reaction and response from these advocacy efforts.

Project CLA reporting

Obviously while the project is being funded there is a requirement for the project to report to its funders and to steer the capacity building process to enable CLA to operate.

➢ The programme should include people's indicators (i.e. the indicators monitored by the local structures/citizen groups) in their project and programme results framework and these should become the **most important indicators of change.**

Tip 15
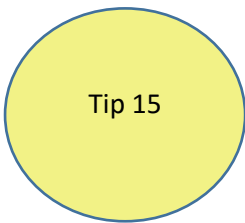
The GHR pilot had problems retro-fitting the CLA indicators into their established and agreed results framework. Ideally the indicators should only be established **after** running the informal participatory sessions which generate change statements to ensure that we only use people's indicators of change. This would need to be explained to donors so that indicators are only fixed at baseline and any used in preliminary documentation such as project proposals are agreed to be indicative only (until the baseline is conducted). **Lesson learned: build the results framework from people's perspectives not ours.**

The following table provides examples (one from the GHR pilot and the other imagined) showing how the CLA fits into the programme results framework

Change statements generated by the community	Baseline Data collected by SMC and recorded in booklet	Programme indicator	Programme outcome
'teachers should be present in school hours', 'teachers always come late and leave early', 'teachers spend time in the teachers room not in the class room', 'teachers go to the bank to collect their salaries and are gone for days', 'the teacher is always smoking round the back of the school' etc	Spot checks on different days of the week, noted if the teachers were present/absent in the classroom and if they arrived more than 15 minutes late or left more than 1 hour early. Each school calculates the total student: teacher contact time lost	Increased teacher: student contact time compared with baseline e.g. contact hours gained since baseline. (note ; this would only be one of several indicators to show progress against the programme outcome, others would include timely and sufficient learning resources, school examination pass rate etc)	Students benefit from better education services

Change statements generated by the community	Data collected by community	Programme Indicator	Programme outcome
'Children should not be left on their own when parents go to the field' 'lots of children roam the village all day', 'girls stay home to look after their younger brothers and sisters', 'nobody supervises these kids' , 'kids on their own get into trouble', ' kids looking after kids'	Periodic Spot home visits/community with counts of children left at home on their own	Numbers of children left on their own reduced. Numbers missing school because of caring for their younger siblings reduced.	Children benefit from better childcare practices

Tip 16
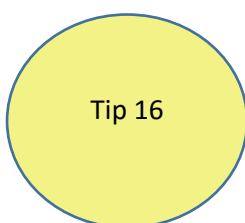
The GHR pilot ran the CLA only in a sample of locations. As we now know that the CLA works, any future roll out should be across all locations and for every local structure involved. This avoids concerns about the sample size and its representivity. **Lesson learned: introduce the use of CLA record booklets for all participating local structures/citizen groups and factor this into the project design from the start.**

Future challenges

The new direction of Trocaire worldwide means that the GHR programme of the Malawi office will be phased out and more emphasis will be placed on its gender and HIV, livelihoods and disaster preparedness programmes. The review of the GHR pilot also included field visits and discussions with staff from these programmes in order to assess the potential to adopt CLA in these programmes. Both the livelihoods and HIV programme work with citizens groups; irrigation users groups, agricultural committees, disaster risk reduction groups (within VDCs), Star circles, credit groups and Village Savings and Loans Groups (VSL). Like some of the citizen groups in GHR these groups demand services from service providers, organise their own group activities, and some undertake social mobilisation and advocacy.

These citizens groups can use the CLA. Once again the challenge will be to reconcile the programme indicators with those generated through the CLA. For any new programmes the CLA needs to be done at the start of the project cycle to avoid this.

Many shared the frustration in both GHR pilot programmes and Trocaire Malawi's other programmes of the **turnover in citizens groups** and elections often result in a completely new group. Steps need to be taken to change ToRs and constitutions to ensure election terms are staggered so that no more than 50% of group members complete their term of office at a time. Special care needs to be taken to ensure that the terms of office of senior positions (Chair, Secretary, Treasurer) are alternated. Programmes need to encourage citizens groups to undertake their own mentoring, so that members

who stand down at election time do so on condition of mentoring their replacement for a few months after they are installed.

In order to ensure continuity of use of the CLA, the citizens groups need to be encouraged to mobilise their own funds or have funds provided (e.g. DHO pays for the re-printing of booklets for HFACs). Local printing of booklets can be done quite cheaply.

Tip 17
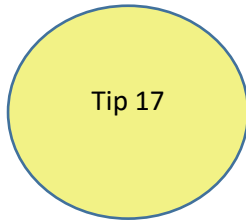
While training and orientation to CLA should be a 'must' for all staff (including finance and administration), CLA must also have champions within Trocaire to continuously promote, remind and quality assure the process. The key principles outlined above must be continuously endorsed and not taken for granted. The CLA requires a fairly major mind-shift in order to truly support putting 'people in the driving seat' and needs time and patience to actualise.

For the future and to reduce the costly processes used in GHR pilot to collect data from the field, Trocaire needs to find a **mobile-app** which they can use reliably and easily so that real time data is recorded rather than relying on the time-intensive process of collecting data through field visits. The system used in the GHR pilot depended too heavily on project staff collecting data themselves from the field. As well as being costly and inefficient it may perpetuate the idea that the collection of data is for outside or higher authority use rather than for the use of the local structures/citizen's groups. [6]

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[6] Open Data Kit (ODK) is a free and open-source set of tools which help organizations author, field, and manage mobile data collection solutions. This has been used successfully in a number of developing countries for citizens to input their own data. It has ready-made survey templates which could be adapted to resemble the key data in the CLA record booklets. The app is easy to use and does not require a computer programmer to manage. Data is copied from the CLA booklets onto mobile devices and sent to the server. ODK allows the collator to aggregate data and extract into useful formats. Images can also be uploaded along with GPS locations. If there is temporarily no phone signal, the phone can save the information to send later when reception is available. Back up power banks are cheap and can extend use where electricity connection is intermittent.

References

Cracedo, Maria Fernandez, 2015 Mid-term Evaluation Governance and Huaman Rights Programme Malawi Final Report (30 May 2015)

Jupp, Dee and Sohel Ibn Ali, 2010 *'Measuring Empowerment? Ask them'* Sida Publications

Annex: Background on the Malawi Governance and Human Rights (GHR) Programme

Currently in its **third phase**;

> 1st phase :June '06 to May '08,
>
> 2nd phase: June '09 to May '12,
>
> 3rd phase; June '12 to May '17.

Core goal

'Malawians living in poverty exercise their rights to improved government services'.

Specific Objectives

Specific Objective 1: To ensure better social services for men and women as a result of strengthened local structures

Specific Objective 2: To promote the implementation of pro-poor policies and practices by the Government

Specific Objective 3: To strengthen the capacity of GHR partners to effectively advocate for the implementation of pro - poor policies and better social services

Since the end of 2011, some shifts have been introduced

- The advocacy focus of the programme moved from being centred at the national level, to include **interventions at the local level**.

- A 'citizen led monitoring' baseline was developed in 2012 and was rolled out from early 2013. This baseline, and the tools developed, became the main M&E tool of the programme

- The programme moved from being managed from Ireland (2006 – 2008) to being managed by a Programme Office in country (2008- 2013).

- Five partners have remained throughout the years (MEJN, MHEN, CFSC and CSEC). Two have been phased out (Nanzikambe and IPRSE). At the moment the programme operates with five key partners (see Table)

Malawi Economic Justice Network (MEJN)	Provides Economic Literacy through budget training, consultation and participation, both at national and local level (through 26 MEJN established chapters at the district level)
Malawi Health Equity Network (MHEN)	Advocates for improved health services in Malawi through budget training, consultation and participation. MHEN also carries out specific health campaigns and pieces of research. The network works at both national and local level through a membership of 70 CSOs around the country.
Civil Society Coalition for Education (CSEC)	Advocates for improved education system through budget training, consultation and participation. CSEC also carries out specific education campaigns and pieces

	of research. The network works at both the national and local level through a well established network of DENs (District Education Network), present in 26 districts of Malawi
Centre for Social Concern (CFSC)	Seeks to promote Justice and Peace and Interfaith dialogue in Malawi. CFSC also advocates for a pro-poor focus of national policies.

Coverage: 19 districts

Focus capacity building on Local structures:

Village/community level

Village Development Committees (VDCs)
School management committees (SMCs)
Health Facility Advisory Committees (HFACs)
Basic Needs Advocacy Groups (BAGs)

Sub national level:

Area Development Committees (ADCs)

District Education Networks (DENs)

National level:

Partners (in Table)

only the one sitting on the anthill knows the ants are biting