ALL IN
ALL LEARNING!

Longitudinal Evaluation

Interim Report: Phase 1 Findings

February 2022

(final report due December 2023)

Contents

1. Background
2. What has happened so far
3. Programme outcomes and learning
4. Organisational Strengthening outcomes and learning
5. Programme effectiveness
6. Conclusion - programme relevance
7. Way forward

Acronyms

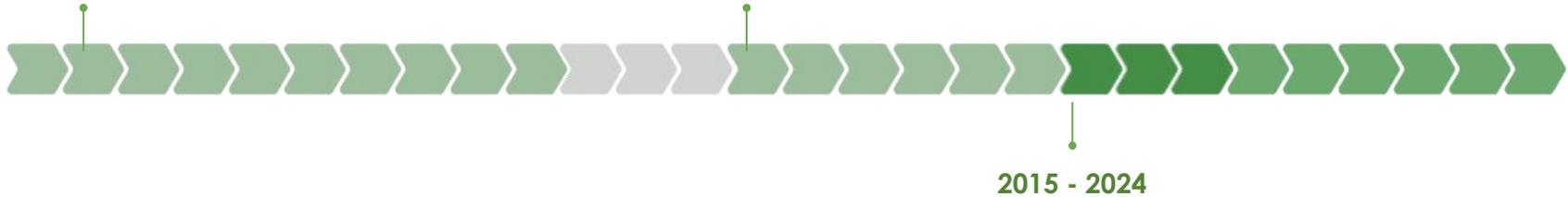|				
ADD	Action on Disability and Development		AIAL	All In All Learning
ADP	Actions for Development Programmes		CBO	Community-Based Organisation
AJDES	Association of Youth for Development in the Sahel		CSO	Civil Society Organisation
AKF	Aga Khan Foundation		CR	Comic Relief
CAVWOC	Centre for Alternatives for Victimised Women and Children		CwD	Children with Disabilities
CST	Child Support Tanzania		DFID	Department for International Development
CYECE	Centre for Youth Empowerment and Civic Education		ECD	Early Childhood Development
DDIA	Deaf Development and Information Association		FCDO	Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office
DPP	Disability and Development Partners		IE	Inclusive Education
GENET	Girls' Empowerment Network		MEL	Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning
GMHD	Grassroots Movement for Health and Development		MTR	Mid-Term Review
LABE	Literacy and Adult Basic Education		OS	Organisational Strengthening
SAIDE	South African Institute for Distance Education		RG	Reference Group
SNEC	Syndicat National de l'Education et de la Culture		SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
USDC	Uganda Society for Disabled Children		SEN	Special Educational Needs
VSO	Voluntary Services Overseas		SGBV	Sexual and Gender-Based Violence
ZOCS	Zambia Open Community Schools		UK	United Kingdom
			VfM	Value for Money

Background

History of Comic Relief Education Funding

Comic Relief funded 173 projects with an education component under programmes for street-connected and working children, girls, disability, pastoralists, slum-dwellers, conflict-affected and those affected by HIV/AIDS.

1996 - 2008

In 2009 Comic Relief set up an education programme. In 2011, it recruited a designated Education International Grants Programme Manager and received the first tranche of DFID match-funding for health and education. It awarded 20 grants to 18 partners across 10 sub-Saharan Africa countries – including 'Special Initiatives' aiming to bring systemic change.

2009 - 2014

2015 - 2024

The AIAL programme began in 2015, match-funded by DFID (now FCDO). It supports a number of previously funded partners - including LABE, Save the Children, ADD, Leonard Cheshire, SAIDE, ZOCS, Oxfam Novib and Education International. AIAL is shaped by the International Education Funders' Group, by country-level Theory of Change meetings with potential partners and by engaging governments and development partners.

AIAL Programme: March 2015 - March 2024

The '*All In All Learning!*' programme (AIAL) is a partnership between UK Aid and Comic Relief to **improve educational opportunities and outcomes** for the poorest and **most disadvantaged** while building **stronger more inclusive education** systems in sub-Saharan Africa.

PHASE 1 (2015-2022): £20m invested in 26 partners in nine countries for four areas of work (see right) - 73% of projects in Tanzania and Malawi.

PHASE 2 (2019-2024): £5.5m as cost extensions to six Phase 1 partners to consolidate and build on successful work; and seven new projects funded in Uganda to expand AIAL geographical reach and develop a new programme of collective learning. Phase 2 narrows the focus to the first two areas of work: children with disabilities and early childhood education.

See AIAL Theory of Change on next slide

Outcomes

- Marginalised children are able to access and remain in inclusive, quality education
- Education systems and staff have the capacity to deliver safe and inclusive, quality education
- Parents, communities and civil society organisations are actively engaged in strengthening inclusive, quality education

Areas of work

1. Children with disabilities get into, stay in and learn in mainstream schools
2. Providing and advocating for good quality early childhood education for disadvantaged children
3. Combatting sexual and other violence in schools
4. Improving the quality of education for most marginalised children

AIAL Theory of Change (updated May 2021)

OBJECTIVE

The poorest and most disadvantaged children have improved educational opportunities and outcomes

OUTCOMES FOR CHILDREN

Children are **in school**
- Enrolment
- Attendance/retention/completion/transition

Children are **learning**
- Examination or assessment results
- Psychosocial outcomes

Children experience a **safe and inclusive** school environment
- Children's perceptions of safety within schools
- Levels and types of discrimination experienced

Children are **empowered**
- Children's self-confidence and self-esteem
- Children's knowledge and awareness of their rights
- Children taking an active role

SUPPORTING PILLARS

Systems are more inclusive and responsive to disadvantaged groups

Changes in policies, strategies, plans, procedures, processes, data, resources etc. at:
- National level
- District level
- School level

Officials and staff have the capacities to deliver inclusive, quality education

Changes in attitudes, behaviours, skills and capacities of staff at:
- National level
- District level
- School level

Parents, communities and CSOs are actively engaged in strengthening inclusive, quality education

- Changes in parental capacities to support their children, including improved livelihoods and food security
- Changes in parent and community attitudes to education and disadvantaged groups
- Community engagement in education (SMCs, PTAs etc.)
- Community/CSO advocacy (school, district, national level)

7

About the AIAL Evaluation (1)

Note: This is an interim report capturing impact and learning from Phase 1 of AIAL. The final report will be published in Dec 2023.

Aims:

- to assess the programme's performance and impact
- to identify learning and recommendations in relation to relevance; impact and sustainability; learning about approaches; programme effectiveness

Principles

- **Participation:** ownership by partners and funders; involving and feeding back to children and young people
- **Inclusion:** analysis of gender, disability and marginalisation across the evaluation process and data
- **Appreciative inquiry:** asset-based approach that recognises and builds on people's strengths and skills
- **Confidentiality and dignity**: transparency in information about the evaluation and consultation/ consent
- **Feedback and referral**: mechanisms for feeding back learning and signposting to support where needed

Approach in Phase 1 (see sources – annex 1)

- **Inception interviews:** with Comic Relief former and current staff and with the learning network hosts
- **Partner poll:** input into the evaluation approach and engagement
- **Document review:** AIAL programme information; grant narrative and financial reports; external research; external evaluations
- **Reference Group:** comprising partners, Comic Relief, Maanda evaluator and AIAL evaluation team to advise and challenge
- **Virtual sessions:** partner peer learning and analysis
- **Case studies:** selected primarily as good examples of sustainability across different areas of focus for AIAL, including children benefiting, outcomes for children and supporting pillars (see ToC on slide 7) - and across a range of contexts. They were drawn initially from the document review and analysis of the data matrix and then discussed with Comic Relief and the evaluation Reference Group. Data was collated through virtual interviews and participatory activities with partner staff.

About the AIAL Evaluation (2)

Evidence

The evaluation assessed the quality of documented evidence for each project. The team compiled information in a data matrix, grading the evidence as weak, medium or strong according to the rigour of partner final and annual reports and of external mid-term and final evaluations - and cross-checking this with Comic Relief's feedback.

The evaluation team triangulated that evidence and explored gaps in the data through the virtual sessions with partners and with the Comic Relief AIAL and learning teams, further deepening the analysis through the case studies.

Limitations

- **COVID-19 restricted the range of evaluation sources,** making it infeasible to carry out Primary research and even to interview government personnel as planned for the case studies because of the additional pressure on partner availability

- **Children and community voices not reflected**: neither programme nor project level data captures clearly their perspectives and analysis - something that will be addressed in Phase 2 of the evaluation

- **Gaps in data:** 24 of the 33 grants in Phase 1 of the programme are ongoing with some final reports and evaluations still to come in

- **Limited engagement from FCDO** because of internal changes in the context and personnel - this could affect their use of the findings in Phase 1

AIAL Longitudinal Evaluation Journey

Inception:
Aug-Sept 2021

- **Introductory calls**
- **Partner emails + polls**
- **Data matrix set-up**
- **Final approach developed**

Reference group 1 - Sep '21

Phase 1::
October 2021 - March 2022

- **Desk review of projects**
- **Phase 1 partner Zoom**
- **Phase 1 case studies**
- **Phase 1 + 2 partner analysis**

RG 2 - Dec '21

Phase 2:
February 2022 - 2023

- **Review phase 2 approach**
- **Tracer studies carried out**
- **Desk review of projects**
- **Primary research**

RG 3 + 4 - Feb + Oct '22

Final analysis and report:
Aug - Nov 2023

- **Partner analysis**
- **Case studies finalised**
- **Dissemination of learning**

RG 5+ 6 - Aug + Nov '23

AIAL - A Changing Context

2015

Education in sub-Saharan Africa:
- Primary gross enrolment up to 98% - education for all
- Need for increased focus on quality and inclusion – learning for all
- International and national frameworks in place for child rights, disability, women's rights and education, including SDG 4 on inclusive and equitable quality education and lifelong learning
- ECD national policies, coordination and funding lag behind the strong evidence of its cost-effectiveness and its impact on disadvantaged children

AIAL funders:
- DFID focus on learning, reaching all children and helping girls stay in school: combining system strengthening and accountability to citizens
- DFID disability strategy developed in 2015
- Comic Relief mainly funding through UK and International NGOs
- Comic Relief - education specialist leadership

Civil Society:
- Some governments have constricted space for civil society (e.g. Malawi's high CSO registration fees and Tanzanian bureaucracy and policies prevent girls re-entering education after pregnancy)
- CSO role is important in wider spread of skills
- NGOs more trusted than other institutions in UK

(information referenced from AIAL business case and other source docs - see Annex 1)

2021

Education in sub-Saharan Africa:
- COVID-19 leads to school closures; online working; increased marginalisation - especially for CwD; and economic hardship
- COVID-19 increases inequalities and gender-based violence
- Changes in government priorities due to COVID-19
- Need to accelerate progress on SDG 4: remote learning; teachers' ICT skills; catch-up learning; and psychosocial support
- Reinforcement of Global Cooperation Mechanism for Education

AIAL funders:
- FCDO updates its disability strategy 2018-23
- FCDO merges DFID and Foreign Office 2020
- Comic Relief increases resources for direct funding
- Comic Relief develops a new Social Change Strategy in 2018
- Comic Relief technical expertise focuses on grant management
- Comic Relief develops an Organisational Strengthening model to help partners continue working effectively beyond project funding
- More rigorous expectations in safeguarding and financial management

Civil Society:
- COVID-19 leads to emotional and physical impact on staff
- Changes in government response to civil society, e.g. more open in Tanzania and Malawi and positive space in Uganda (through national education working group and government project visits)
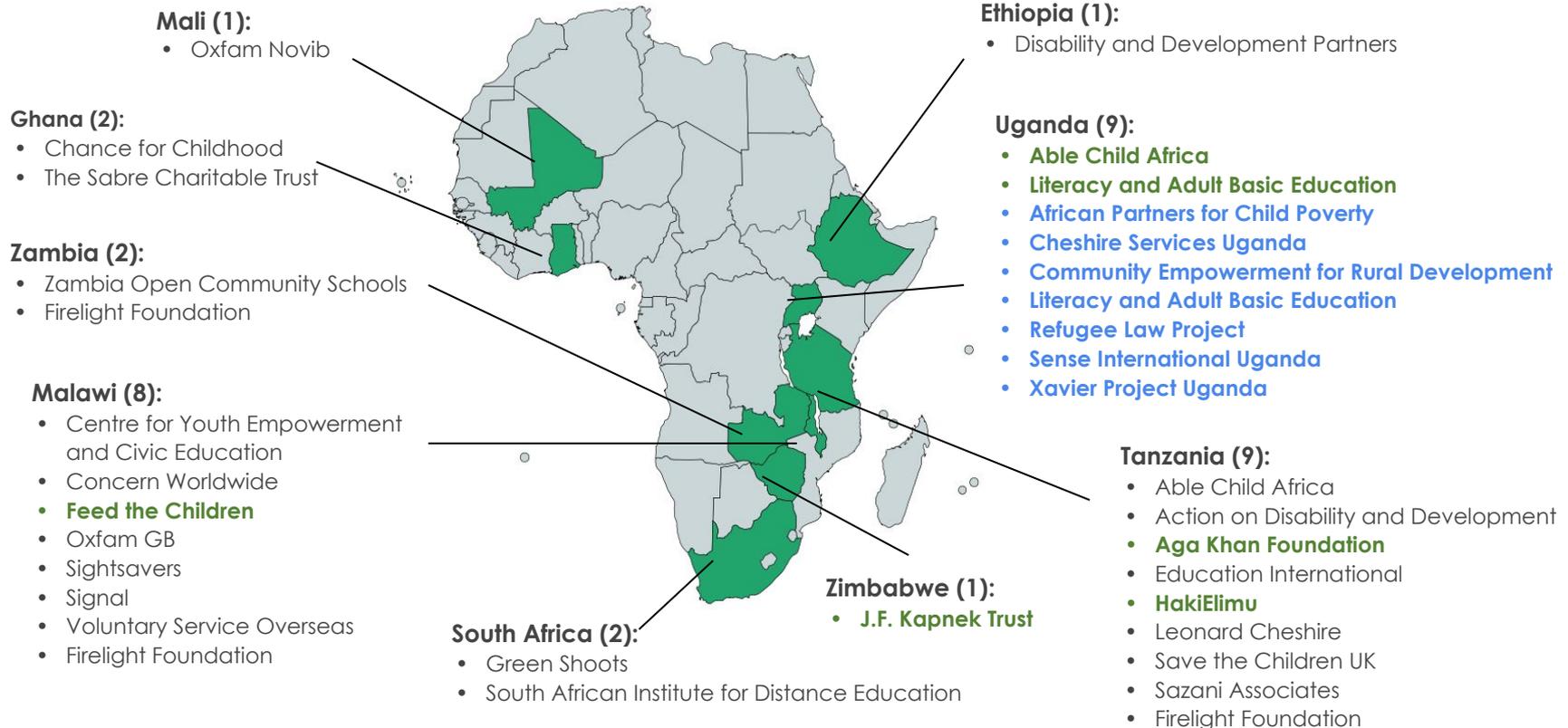- Civil Society's role in policy influence is increasingly recognised

(information from partner analysis session and AIAL Reference Group)

What has Happened So Far

▲
Back

Total Investments

33 across 9 countries (Phase 1 - 26; Phase 2 - **6 extensions** and **7 new investments**)

Mali (1):
- Oxfam Novib

Ghana (2):
- Chance for Childhood
- The Sabre Charitable Trust

Zambia (2):
- Zambia Open Community Schools
- Firelight Foundation

Malawi (8):
- Centre for Youth Empowerment and Civic Education
- Concern Worldwide
- **Feed the Children**
- Oxfam GB
- Sightsavers
- Signal
- Voluntary Service Overseas
- Firelight Foundation

South Africa (2):
- Green Shoots
- South African Institute for Distance Education

Ethiopia (1):
- Disability and Development Partners

Uganda (9):
- **Able Child Africa**
- **Literacy and Adult Basic Education**
- **African Partners for Child Poverty**
- **Cheshire Services Uganda**
- **Community Empowerment for Rural Development**
- **Literacy and Adult Basic Education**
- **Refugee Law Project**
- **Sense International Uganda**
- **Xavier Project Uganda**

Zimbabwe (1):
- **J.F. Kapnek Trust**

Tanzania (9):
- Able Child Africa
- Action on Disability and Development
- **Aga Khan Foundation**
- Education International
- **HakiElimu**
- Leonard Cheshire
- Save the Children UK
- Sazani Associates
- Firelight Foundation

Note: Firelight Foundation supported work in Malawi, Tanzania and Zambia; LABE received 2 grants (under phase 2)
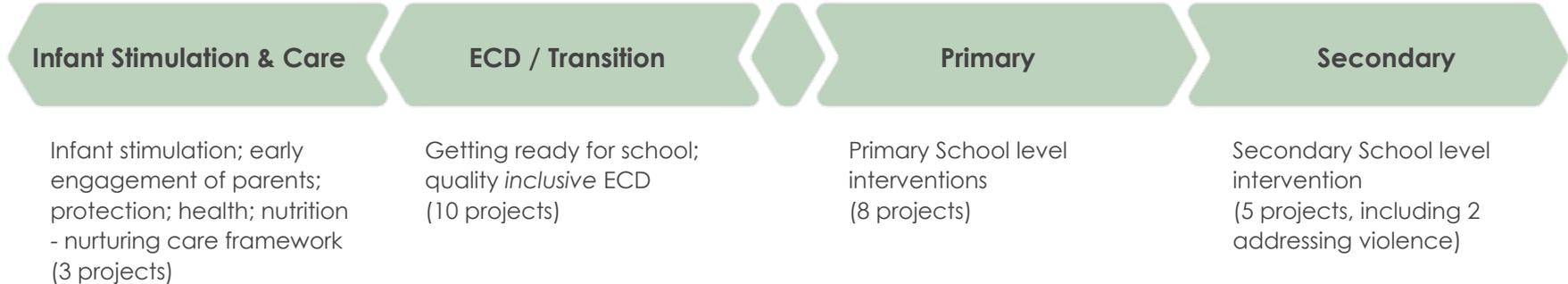
13

Who Projects have Benefitted

Indicator	Milestone August 2021	Achievement against milestone		
		Total	Male	Female
Total number of people supported in AIAL projects	558,163	774,010	363,166	410,312
1.1 Number of marginalised children supported to be in school *	51,599	94,453	41,669	47,458
1.2 Number of marginalised children demonstrating improved learning outcomes and life skills *	57,784	53,286	17,215	36,005
1.3 Number of children who experience a safer and more inclusive learning environment *	104,831	189,815	91,349	98,466

Figures provided by Comic Relief based on collation of partner report information as of August 2021.
Total number supported includes children. For some partners it also includes others directly benefitting like parents and staff.

* Outcomes figures show the number of children supported under each outcome – so the same children may be counted across multiple outcomes.

Continuum of Work Funded

The evaluation observed that projects have covered a continuum of work supporting children from infancy (aged 0-3) through to secondary school level. While not a specific objective of the AIAL, these linkages can create opportunities for more sustained change across children's lifecycle.

Infant Stimulation & Care	ECD / Transition	Primary	Secondary
Infant stimulation; early engagement of parents; protection; health; nutrition - nurturing care framework (3 projects)	Getting ready for school; quality *inclusive* ECD (10 projects)	Primary School level interventions (8 projects)	Secondary School level intervention (5 projects, including 2 addressing violence)

Ways in which Comic Relief has Supported the AIAL Programme

Programme set-up
- Scoping
- Consulting including with governments and International Education Funders' Group
- Doing Theory of Change workshops with potential partners
- Assessing funding applications in-country

Investment
- Budget templates include: contribution to salaries; overheads; MEL, organisational development; and capital costs - in addition to direct project costs

Comic Relief AIAL outputs agreed with FCDO
1. Comic Relief grantmaking and management supports grantees to deliver their planned activities and outcomes
2. Comic Relief support enables grantees to address organisational capacity gaps

Managing risk in relation to
- Context e.g. COVID-19
- Delivery e.g. partner capacity; ensuring partners conduct viable evaluations
- Fiduciary – including coordinating financial capacity development for funded partners in Malawi
- Safeguarding

Learning
- Supporting and investing in partners' project level MEL systems and capacity (aided by contracted agency)
- Developing and nurturing the AIAL learning networks - see slide 41
- Producing learning studies
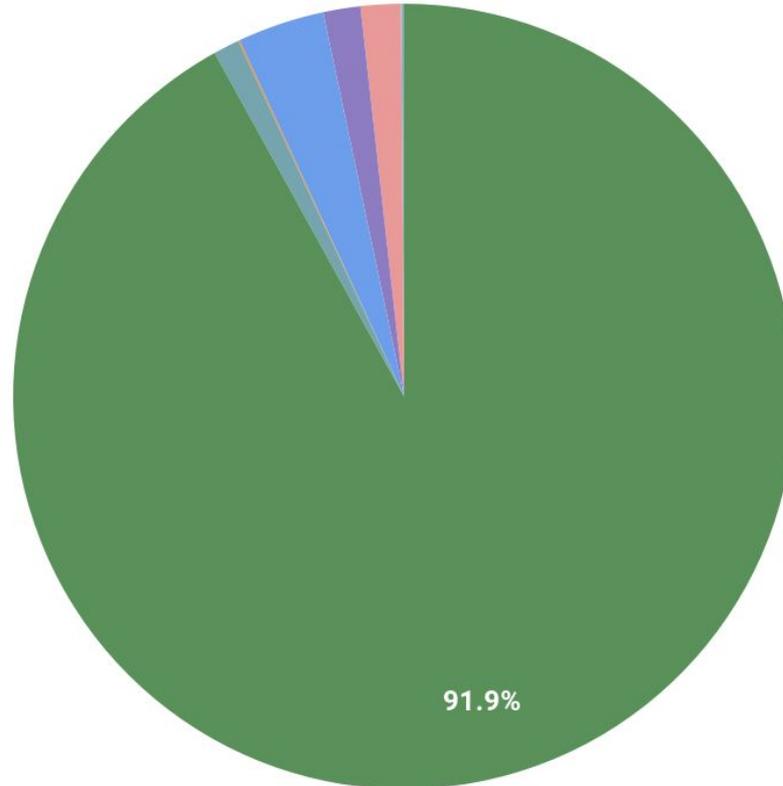- Evaluation of the programme

AIAL COVID response
- When COVID-19 significantly impacted funded partners Comic Relief invited them to submit revised workplans for approval outlining how activities were affected
- In some cases, Comic Relief allowed partners to redistribute budget lines to enable response, prevention and risk assessments

Programme and grant management
- Dedicated Programme Management
- Support in 'funding overview' forms
- Review of six-month and annual reports and external evaluations
- In-person and remote monitoring visits

AIAL Expenditure to December 2021

- ● Grants awarded £21,575,335 (includes both Phase 1 and Phase 2 funding)
- ● Monitoring, Evaluation & Learning £252,224
- ● Communications £15,193
- ● Staff costs (direct and indirect) £843,274
- ● Other management costs £360,854
- ● Humentum capacity building support £390,211
- ● Organisational Strengthening support £28,203

91.9%

Mid-Term Review Findings – May 2020

Theory of Change: holds true but needs more focus on strengthening livelihoods and food security (see AIAL Theory of Change on slide 7)

Good progress towards children's outcomes and pillars: needs more work on children's empowerment (especially for children with disabilities and young children); some mixed results in learning attainment and more on the supporting pillar of work with parents and communities

Inaccurate assumptions: about supportive government budget and policies for ECD and inclusion; for retention of teacher skills and location; and for impact of increased access on quality

Comic Relief support: high quality support in flexible adaptive grant management, external MEL support and in safeguarding practices

Organisational Strengthening: partners' MEL capacity has improved and financial management support in Malawi has attracted more funding and built capacity; there is need for more standardised training in key areas by Comic Relief and more support from lead partners to develop and monitor OS plans

Learning: networks have supported collective learning, improved services and strengthened advocacy - there is need for a UK network and more inter-network learning both within AIAL and externally

Comic Relief response

Theory of Change: amended to include livelihoods and food security under parent and community pillar as a way to promote their engagement in inclusive education; encourage use of the ECD nurturing framework and links to Comic Relief's Rise and Shine ECD programme in Malawi (see slide 7)

Children's empowerment: not been fully integrated as included late in ToC - will review funding overview forms, explore how partners are measuring this and ensure it is revisited in the final evaluation

Children's learning outcome: already part of indicators but will encourage partners to improve learning outcomes and promote collective learning

Organisational Strengthening: will continue flexible grant management and apply Comic Relief's new OS model (not training) to strengthen partner ownership of OS, supported by quality local providers

Learning: continue to support networks to decide priorities and will consider a UK network, though most UK funded projects are ending

Programme Outcomes and Learning

AIAL Programme Outcomes Achieved for Children

Children are in school
- Children with disabilities and marginalised in other ways access ECD
- Improved transition to, enrolment and retention in Primary school for CwD and others
- Drop-out rates at Primary and lower Secondary school declined
- Pregnant girls and young mothers enabled to return to school

Children are learning
- Children are learning more effectively through improved approaches e.g. child-centred and play-based methods and improved teacher capacity
- Children attain better literacy and numeracy
- Pass rates in end of year exams improved
- Children access local materials, story books and other resources that impact learning

Children are empowered:
- Children learn life skills and take active role in managing their own learning
- CwDs and other marginalised children take on leadership roles in class
- Children take part in more school and extra-curricular activities
- Children help younger children in pre-school; others teach their parents

Children experience a safe and inclusive environment
- Improved infrastructure and learning environment for CwDs
- Children experience less corporal punishment
- Children report violence in schools and communities - and receive support
- Reduced child marriages and other harmful practices as a result of community action

(information source: grant reports and external evaluations; and partner feedback)

Outcomes for Children - Some Highlights

Chance for Childhood and Street Girls Aid Ghana helped children of street-connected young mothers access ECD and transition to Primary school - a total of 235 children enrolled at Kibnu ECD centre

Aga Khan Foundation and Madrasa Early Childhood Programme Zanzibar enabled children in remote communities to access ECD with over 50% of satellite preschools developing community feeding programmes

ADD and Shivyawata Tanzania helped secure doubling of the national budget for special needs; increased interaction between children with disabilities and non-disabled peers in play activities (singing, football) from 38% to 87%

Signal and Livingstonia Synod Malawi helped children with disabilities to enrol and learn; chiefs helped parents' groups and passed by-laws to support inclusive education; 80% of community leaders express support for SNE learners

DDP and DDIA Ethiopia teaching of sign language transformed communication and the whole school environment for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing

Save the Children and ADP Mbozi Tanzania 75% of target parents report using violence-free strategies one month on; children have improved learning outcomes

CYECE, GMHD and Chinansi Foundation Malawi enabled marginalised children to report rape cases and followed them through to sentencing

(information source: grant reports and external evaluations; and partner feedback)

COMBATTING SEXUAL GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

Evidence: *reliable evidence from reports, high quality data, and case study session with GENET and OXFAM*

The big story:
Against the backdrop of high teenage pregnancies, harmful cultural practices and increased violence towards girls, OXFAM, GENET and CAVWOC have initiated a movement against sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV). As a result, teen mothers are staying in school and girls feel safer in their learning environments. They have been empowered and become powerful community voices speaking out: as many as 78% of girls report violence in their schools. This means that child marriages and teenage pregnancy have decreased and 55% of girls stay in school. Community structures such as mother groups are sustaining this movement as they take responsibility, responding to the issues affecting girls in school.

The approach:
Partners take a strong community-based approach, setting up support structures that protect girls from SGBV in schools. Mothers' groups, girls' clubs and teachers have become effective in reporting and dealing with SGBV. Local chiefs have championed the development of by-laws to protect girls' rights and operate as anti-SGBV ambassadors, identifying and speaking out about SGBV issues affecting girls in their area. Partners have invested in the community by conducting trainings on anti-SGBV laws, accessing justice, reporting and follow-up on cases and other issues beyond the project. At national level Oxfam has advocated on issues concerning girls in schools, bringing them to the forefront of parliament.

Success factors:
★ Community collaboration, including leveraging traditional leaders' political will and action
★ Lobbying for increased national level budget, so more funds are allocated to sections of social welfare dealing with implementing specific activities against GBV
★ Oxfam played an important role in advocacy: *"Oxfam had networks at the higher levels of influence and with policy-makers. This approach really complemented the work of GENET."*
★ Comic Relief grant funding supported local innovation in communities, producing local solutions
★ Mobilisation of resources in targeted areas to cover gaps in implementation

Oxfam UK received a AIAL grant of **£1,000,000** over 36 months

Partners: GENET and CAVWOC

Country: Malawi

Area of work (linked to AIAL ToC):
Combatting sexual and other violence

Key achievements

- Learners returned to school: 15,493 girls re-enrolled back in school; 173 girls re-admitted in school after child birth by effectively implementing the re-admission policy
- 3600 learners (2400 girls and 1200 boys) have life skills and knowledge about Sexual and Reproductive Health, menstrual hygiene management and SGBV through 60 anti-SGBV school clubs
- GENET team said: *"We have had a lot of girls who are teen mothers greatly supported by community structures such as the mothers' group."* – inputs included books, school uniforms and space for young mothers to nurse their children in school
- Increase in girls selected for secondary school
- Increased community collaboration on SGBV issues affecting girls in school: community empowered to be drivers of change

Lasting impact: areas to trace through?

Where are the empowered girls now?
- *What lasting impact did the project have on the girls beyond the project?*
- *In what ways are girls still using their voice in their schools and communities?*

Sustainability and growth
- *How have community and school level structures become more influential?*

Shift in community attitudes and awareness

- Positive masculinity evidenced in men's attitudes towards, and support for, girls' education – the outcome was the emergence of male champions in the community
- Increased community awareness of SGBV issues led to 87% of learners feeling supported because of actions addressing harmful practices
- *"The project strategically created GBV prevention networks that placed traditional leaders in the forefront to monitor and register cases …in their communities. Because of that approach it was easier for them to champion this [anti-SGBV movement]"*
- 100% of teachers and workers expressed confidence in addressing incidences of violence and abuse in schools

Organisational Strengthening and learning

- Effective financial management systems: GENET staff said *"we were attached to a mentor through Humentum. Through the process we saw our organisation being strengthened in terms of systems - to the extent that some of the grants we were not able to access, we are now able to access."*
- "*Comic Relief was able to place us within networks where we were able to learn from other organisations*" – In July 2019, Oxfam and partners GENET and CAVWOC participated in the meetings organised by Comic Relief and HakiElimu for formulating an AIAL Network in Malawi with organisations doing similar work to GENET

(statistics source: final report and external final evaluation)

AIAL Systemic Outcomes Achieved

Systems are more inclusive
- Influenced national uptake of models e.g. for ECD, model classes, community-run Primary schools
- Getting inclusive education into national strategies and their implementation
- District policies adopted e.g. abolishing exam processing fees; modification of exams for CwDs
- Tracking national and district budget e.g. resulting in increased inclusion support
- Partner advocacy and participation in government technical working groups, influencing national strategies, policies and implementation

Officials and staff have capacity
- Improved attitudes, competencies and behaviours of teachers to marginalised, CwDs etc
- Monitoring frameworks to assess teacher competency leads to improved monitoring of teachers and schools at national level and/ or by district authorities
- Improved quality of teaching approaches especially child-centred and play-based
- Developing referral systems that result in officials taking up responsibilities across different sectors

Parents, communities and civil society organisations strengthened
- Strengthened and activated School Management Committees and Parent Teachers Associations e.g. so they monitor student attendance and performance
- Activation of Parent Support Groups, Mothers' groups, Fathers' groups etc. advocating to government and community to increase support and referral systems
- Care-givers adopt behaviours that support children's development and reduce violence
- Communities pass by-laws that support children's access and attendance in school e.g. to reduce harmful practices; and others that allow them to sit exams if school costs are not paid
- Galvanising support from traditional and faith leaders for inclusive education
- Supported community organisations to run inclusive education initiatives effectively

(information source: grant reports and external evaluations; and partner feedback)

Systemic Outcomes - Some Highlights

HakiElimu Tanzania strengthened implementation of the national inclusive education strategy, tracking budgets and getting duty bearers playing their part

Sabre Trust Ghana developed a network of model schools where trainee teachers learn effective play-based methods and project has informed government development of a Newly Qualified Teacher induction year

Zambia Open Community Schools secured deployment of 410 government trained teachers and grants to 50 community Primary schools, and examination licences for 36 community schools.

Education International and Tanzania Teachers' Union developed a competency profile for teachers that government is using to ensure minimum standards

Sazani Associates UK and Zanzibar enabled teachers to improve attitudes, skills and behaviour towards teaching children and classroom management; self-reflection on their approach; provide peer support to one another and pass on skills to others

Oxfam, GENET and CAVWOC Malawi developed a safeguarding referral system linking children to support from schools, judiciary, social welfare and health officials and police

(information source: grant reports and external evaluations; and partner feedback)

GOVERNMENT ADOPTS MODEL FOR COST-EFFECTIVE ECD FOR RURAL CHILDREN

Evidence: strong evidence in reports from reliable, high quality data, external evaluation and case study session

Who: Literacy and Adult Basic Education (LABE)

Grant: September 2017 AIAL grant of **£806,453** over 36 months

In May 2020 the grant was extended by **£349,423** for 24 months

Country: Uganda – West Nile (Koboko, Moyo, Obongi districts) and Northern region (Gulu, Nwoya districts)

Area of work: (linked to AIAL ToC): Providing and advocating for good quality ECD for disadvantaged children

The big story:
LABE has provided cost-effective home-based ECD to rural disadvantaged children in a context where ECD is usually private and exclusive to urban areas. The Ministry of Education has integrated LABE's Home Learning Centre model into policy, increasing ECD access for hard-to-reach communities and helping children transition smoothly to school. The approach engages family and village structures, strengthening community ownership. It has three key strands: **child-to-child** where older children work with pre-schoolers; **parent-led** work with children at home; and the work of **Parent Educators at Home Learning Centres** (HLCs). During COVID-19, HLCs became community hubs that stayed open with specially developed learning materials and safety protocols, helping the community access government resources and information.

LABE's approach:
LABE takes a 'whole family' approach, 'Family Basic Education', promoting learning across all ages and generations at HLCs – safe, informal areas around family homes. The HLCs bring together nearby pre-school children, aged three to six years, for ECD sessions, run by a Parent Educator and supported by ECD kits with guidelines, tools and simple training materials. Livelihood-led literacy for parents, tagged to Village Savings and Loans meetings, keeps the community involved: members contribute to an education savings account that covers costs like Parent Educator stipends, feeding, seedlings for the centre food garden and repairs of the outdoor play areas. HLC Management Committees supervise learning activities for children and adults. LABE influences the whole education system by getting ECD policy applied on the ground and working with the National Curriculum Development Centre to develop frameworks for home-based ECD.

Success factors:
★ An enabling policy environment and good working relationship with government
★ Regionally-based staff who speak the same language and understand the context. enhancing trust and acceptance
★ An integrated approach that effectively involves all community members in playing a part in children's education
★ An effective MEL system combined with innovativeness, a non-bureaucratic work culture and experienced staff who have worked together for a long time, enabling quick response to change and adaptation
★ Steady funding and support from Comic Relief, enhancing effectiveness and efficiency

Systems

- The National Curriculum Development Centre and LABE developed a Complementary Learning Framework for ECD – a multi-age package (3-5 years and 5-6 years) for home-based ECD learning
- LABE model recommended by the Ministry of Education as an alternative model for increasing access to ECD education in hard-to-reach communities
- District officials recognise HLCs and use them as reference points and mobilisation centres for other child related activities e.g. immunisation
- The LABE model has expedited integration of non-formal ECD into Education policy frameworks

Sustainability

- LABE signed an MOU with the Ministry of Education recognising the HLC Home-Based ECD model, thus enabling continuous support of government and other agencies
- LABE and the National Curriculum Development Centre developed ECD learning materials approved at national level for adapting to different contexts
- 90% of HLCs are meeting some of their own operational costs by the end of AIAL Phase 1, demonstrating their potential for self-sustained ECD

Multiplier effect: Six organisations are replicating LABE's model in Central, West and Northern Uganda

Organisational Strengthening

- 4 staff registered for a professionally certified ECD course (ELMA funds)
- Staff capacity in non-formal basic education, financial management and data collection improved
- Regular organisational reflective meetings enabled effective response to emerging issues and needs

Communities actively engaged

- Community Village Savings and Loans complement HLC activities
- Parents voluntarily contribute food rations, uniforms and funds or in-kind support; and are involved in learning activities at home, making educational materials and sourcing study materials from government schools
- Parent Educators volunteer to teach the children in HLCs

Collective learning

LABE providing technical support to other AIAL partners – USDC and Feed the Children Malawi

LABE LASTING IMPACT

Outcomes for children

- Children empowered – upper primary school children work with pre-schoolers through fun and play-based activities to enhance readiness for school
- Children with disabilities supported through inclusive education HLCs and partnership with hospitals in Koboko
- Improved safety, reduced corporal punishment
- Better hygiene and nutrition

(statistics source: final report and external final evaluation)

Areas to trace: Impact of HLC activities on the communities
- *How has engaging in HLC learning activities empowered the young facilitators – what roles are they playing in their communities?*
- *What impact has the HLC had on the children? how different are they – including children with disabilities who went through the Inclusive HLCs?*
- *What impact have the VSL Associations had on the parents and communities?*
- *How sustainable is the existence and functionality of the HLCs?*

Other AIAL Programme Outcomes Achieved

Some highlights

Effective response to COVID-19
- ECD centres have become hubs for community action, including awareness about COVID-19
- Partners have helped develop risk assessments and measures for ECD centres to continue during lockdown

Strengthened livelihoods and food security for families
- Parent Support Groups for CwDs have taken Village Savings and Loans approaches, resulting in income generation, increased savings and leveraging government resources and technical support

Multiplier effects of projects
- Partners joined/ leading national technical groups and committees
- Partners influenced assessment practices
- Transfer of Master teachers led to enrolment of CwD in other areas
- Community mobilisation led to ongoing action in improving infrastructure of schools and introducing school feeding programmes
- AIAL partners and other CSOs adapting home-based ECD approaches

Feed the Children Malawi chaired the district ECD network, helping them develop a COVID risk assessment tool and measures to keep ECD going.

LABE Uganda kept ECD going in home learning centres during the COVID-19 lockdown, integrated safety measures and become community hubs.

Able Child Africa and USDC Uganda parent groups' (2,937 members) carried out income generating activities – several led to government grants and free seed and agricultural services.

SAIDE African Story Book Project has made story books in local languages affordable and accessible, unearthing a whole community of people to create stories and a platform where they can share them.

Able Child Africa and CST Tanzania – transition of CwD to secondary school changed community expectations; transfer of trainers led to CwD enrolment in other areas.

Programme Learning: Success Factors

1 Targeting the gaps

- Focus on who is left out/ most marginalised: e.g. **Concern Worldwide, Theatre for Change and WOLREC Malawi** targeted barriers of child marriage, violence, menstruation so girls could return to school
- Highly relevant to the context and children's needs: e.g. **Green Shoots Education Services South Africa** focused on black children's numeracy in early Primary, empowering children to manage their own learning

2 Taking a systemic approach

- Shared ownership, e.g. **Oxfam Novib, AJDES and SNEC Mali** co-created activities and modules with students, teachers etc,
- Embedded in government and community, aligned to priorities and targeted advocacy e.g. **LABE Uganda's** work, activating existing structures
- Effective monitoring, learning and adaptation, e.g. digital adaptation by **VSO Malawi**, developing frameworks that will feed into Malawian government policy for education technology

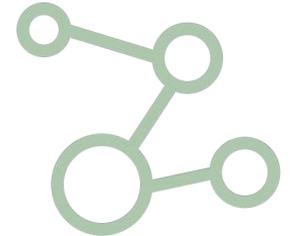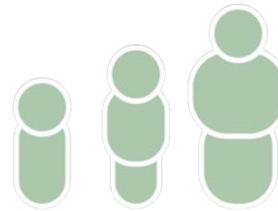## 3 Thinking and acting beyond boundaries…

Holistic approach
Linked to children's health, safety, wellbeing, parental support and livelihoods e.g. **JF Kapnek Zimbabwe's** ECD approach addressed children's cognitive, health and social development

Life-cycle approach
Thinking about transition across all the key periods of a child's life and education e.g. **Sightsavers Malawi** formed partnerships with Primary schools to support transition of CwD from ECD

Phases of work and funding
Phases of work and funding: enabled work to evolve and progress, building on previous stages for sustainability e.g. **Aga Khan, LABE, Able Child Africa** by Comic Relief; and **Sabre Trust** by other donors before AIAL funding

Safety

Health

Wellbeing

Parental Support

Livelihood

Learning to Measure Children's Empowerment

Demonstrating evidence of children's empowerment has been challenging for Comic Relief and its partners, according to the AIAL mid-term review.

This child and youth participation tool enables partners to monitor the impact resulting from children's empowerment in three indicators areas central to AIAL programme:
- Children's voice and influence
- Children's inclusion in learning/ education
- Children's safety from harm

The resulting data is triangulated with duty bearers.

Adapting the scale for AIAL
(see annex 2 for tool)
Could we use this tool to enable children to self-assess their progress in participation and its importance for sustainable change in educational opportunities and outcomes and protection from violence and abuse?

The evaluation will explore this with tracer study partners over the next 18 months, encouraging them to share other tools with each other also.

1.
No voice; out of sight; lacks knowledge about rights and safety

2.
Shares views; knows about learning opportunities; aware of safety and how to seek help

3.
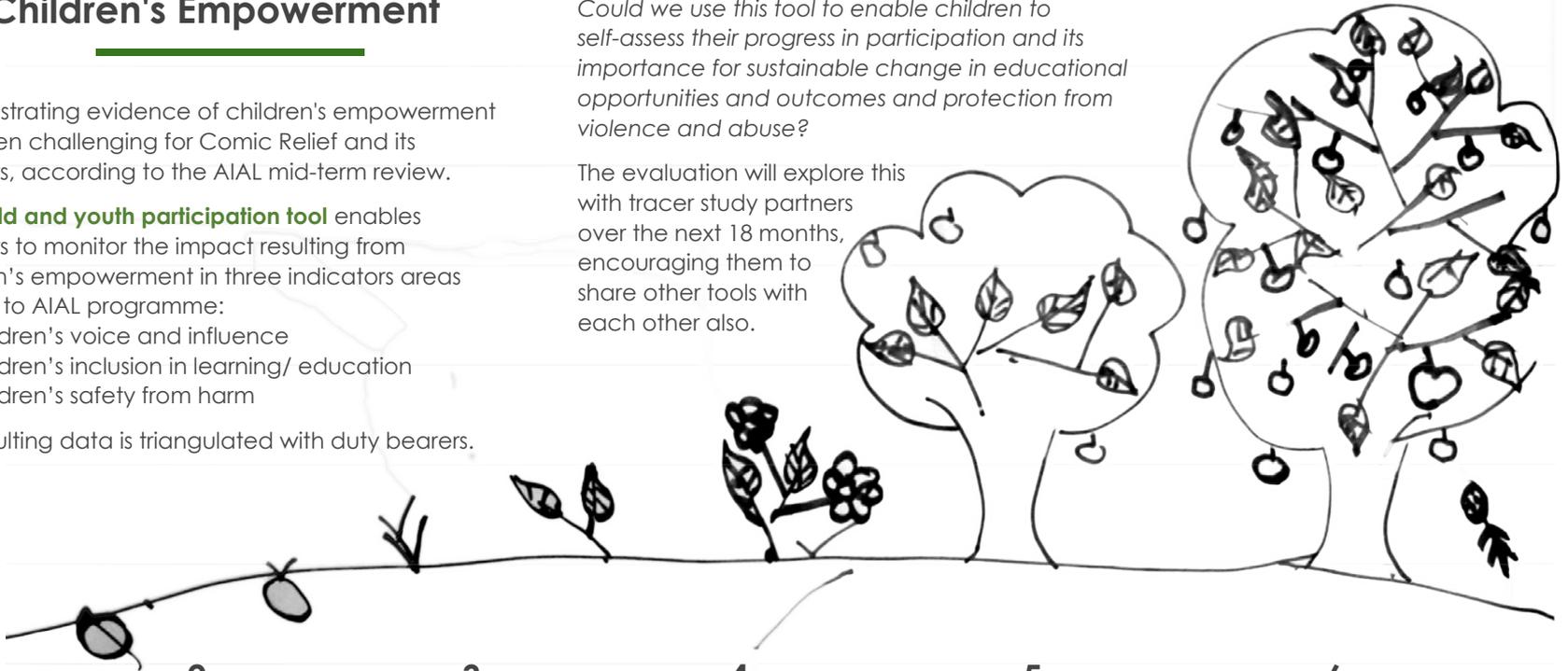Speaks out in group; accesses learning opportunities; reports abuse and gets support

4.
Contributes to group decisions; sense of belonging in learning environment; responsive reporting systems

5.
Influences others' decisions and actions; sets and tracks personal goals; galvanises community protective practices

6.
Ambassadors influencing decisions; helps self and others reap benefits of learning; sustained community protection system

Organisational Strengthening
Outcomes and Learning

Organisational Strengthening Outcomes

Some highlights

Comic Relief designed the AIAL programme to leave partners stronger. This is what 26 partners fed back in an evaluation survey about changes in their organisations (triangulated through project reports and evaluations) Top five OS outcomes listed by funded partners: (brackets show number of partners)

1. **Monitoring, learning and evaluation** (12): increased staff capacity; MEL system; documentation of qualitative data; applying learning

2. **Improved financial sustainability** (7)**:** diversification of funding; improved fundraising; leveraged new funding

3. **Advocacy** (6): engagement with government officials; collaboration with other partners for aligned messages; unlocking of government grants and subsidies

4. **Financial management and reporting** (6): more timely reporting; code of accounts; new software; better systems; able to manage funds without intermediary

5. **Improved approaches and competence in inclusive education** (6): e.g. child-to-child

Partners also reported impact in terms of **project management** (5) with improved planning and reporting; **improved collaboration** (5) and culture of sharing and learning and multi-sectoral partnerships; **organisation visibility and recognition** (4); **safeguarding** (4) with staffing focal point, consent processes, policy development, culture; **improved engagement with community** (3) for local ownership; **improved governance and leadership** (2) with improved monitoring by board, more focus on mission, staff and board retention

CYECE , GMHD and Chinansi Foundation Malawi strengthened their MEL and financial management and developed a community monitoring system

Sabre Trust Ghana produced good evidence and enabled others to use it to produce systemic change, including government adopting the curriculum

ADD and Shivyawata Tanzania helped five Disabled People's Organisations strengthen their leadership, governance and financial capacity

Able Child helped **CST Tanzania and USDC Uganda** develop a regionally-recognised MEL framework and learn from each other and other AIAL partners

ZOCS Zambia improved policy engagement at district, government and parliamentary levels (resulting in more resources for schools in hard-to-reach areas); financial management; and value for money

GENET Malawi strengthened financial systems leading to new donors; and improved safeguarding practices and programming, including a focal person

CREATING A CULTURE OF MONITORING AND LEARNING

Evidence: *strong reports with reliable, high quality data, external mid-term review and staff case study session*

The big story:
USDC have embedded MEL in their organisational culture from board to staff, thanks to the AIAL grant and Able Child Africa's support. Their MEL has developed from *"small in personnel, knowledge, and [board] support"* to "*part and parcel of all project staff's responsibility from the field to headquarters"*. It is integrated in their strategic plan. They have developed a MEL framework with standardised tools, inputting data directly into an online system. 100% of staff demonstrate good MEL practices; a full-time MEL officer coordinates activities; and the board visit the field twice a year to assess the impact of their advocacy work on attitudes, knowledge and practices of local and national government. But there is still more to do: USDC is learning how evidence from children can influence government and others…

USDC's approach:
Able Child Africa supports its partners to "protect, educate and empower". Its niche is reaching children with multiple vulnerabilities of disability, gender, age, location (rural and remote) and poverty. It grew out of USDC's work in Uganda and began supporting other partners in other countries, including securing an AIAL grant for Child Support Tanzania – based on learning from USDCs approach. USDC's **child-to-child approach** supports all children to understand, discuss and take action on issues that impact their lives and to protect themselves from harm. USDC trains teachers; then headteachers and Master Trainers pass on their learning to others. They set up Parents Support Groups that carry out small businesses and advocate for inclusive education, working with schools to leverage extra funds from government.

Success factors:
★ USDC's *"child-to-child training is at the heart of the success"* (MTR) for CwD. Individualised learning plans have helped to strengthen learning outcomes for children
★ Strong collaboration with government, children, parents, teachers and community led to ownership and sustainability – getting everyone to play their part
★ A combination of Comic Relief's funding of core costs, flexibility, trust and manageable reporting requirements with Able Child Africa's accompaniment has enabled USDC to strengthen and embed MEL in its culture
★ Improved data has led to better responsiveness from government and to improved capacity to leverage other funding

Who: Able Child Africa –
a UK-registered NGO

Partner: USDC
Grant: April 2016 AIAL grant of
£530,989 over 60 months
In February 2020, this was extended
by **£299,978**
over 36 months

Country: Northern Uganda –
3 districts

Area of work (linked to AIAL ToC):
Children with disabilities in primary school – extended in Phase 2 to develop home-based ECD model

Officials

- Districts have provided classroom blocks at some schools and access roads
- Improved district monitoring and integration of inclusive education - schools keeping records of enrolment, including of CwD
- District officials allocating new teachers to schools to help CwD enrolment
- Increased local government support for Inclusive Education in all 3 districts
- Funding secured from government for school access, assistive devices, medical support for CwD, paid leave for teachers to study
  - 457 teachers trained, including 54 Master Trainers training others
    - 93% embedding child-to-child approaches
      - More home visits by teachers

Organisational Strengthening

- MEL capacity improved and MEL culture in board and staff, so learning is applied to improve approaches
- Developed inclusive safeguarding guidelines with DFID/ Save the Children

Communities actively engaged

- Parents of CwDs support them more – lobbying district, schools, community groups and buying learning materials
- 2,939 parents in Support Groups – all groups run profitable businesses

Outcomes for children

- 2,603 CwD enrolled in 27 schools (49% girls)
  - 81% show improved learning
    - Nearly all project schools improved accessibility after advocating with government and community
      - 158 assistive devices provided (e.g. wheelchairs, crutches)
        - Children without disability take a lead role in supporting CwDs in school
- 75% CwD improved inclusion in community groups

ACA/ USDC IMPACT

Systems

- *"A noticeable change in policy and practice"* (MTR): 36 Primary Teaching Colleges have embedded inclusive education in their training – expected approval from National Council for Higher Education to make compulsory
- USDC playing a leading role in the Inclusive Education (IE)Task Group - consulted by Ministry of Education and Sport, including on its back- to-school plans and on its National Inclusive Education policy due to be approved 2022
- USDC's child-to-child teacher guide approved by government for use and at second stage of parliamentary process to become legal framework
- MoE approved and planning to adopt Individualised Learning Plan and guide; and Learning Needs Identification tool and guide
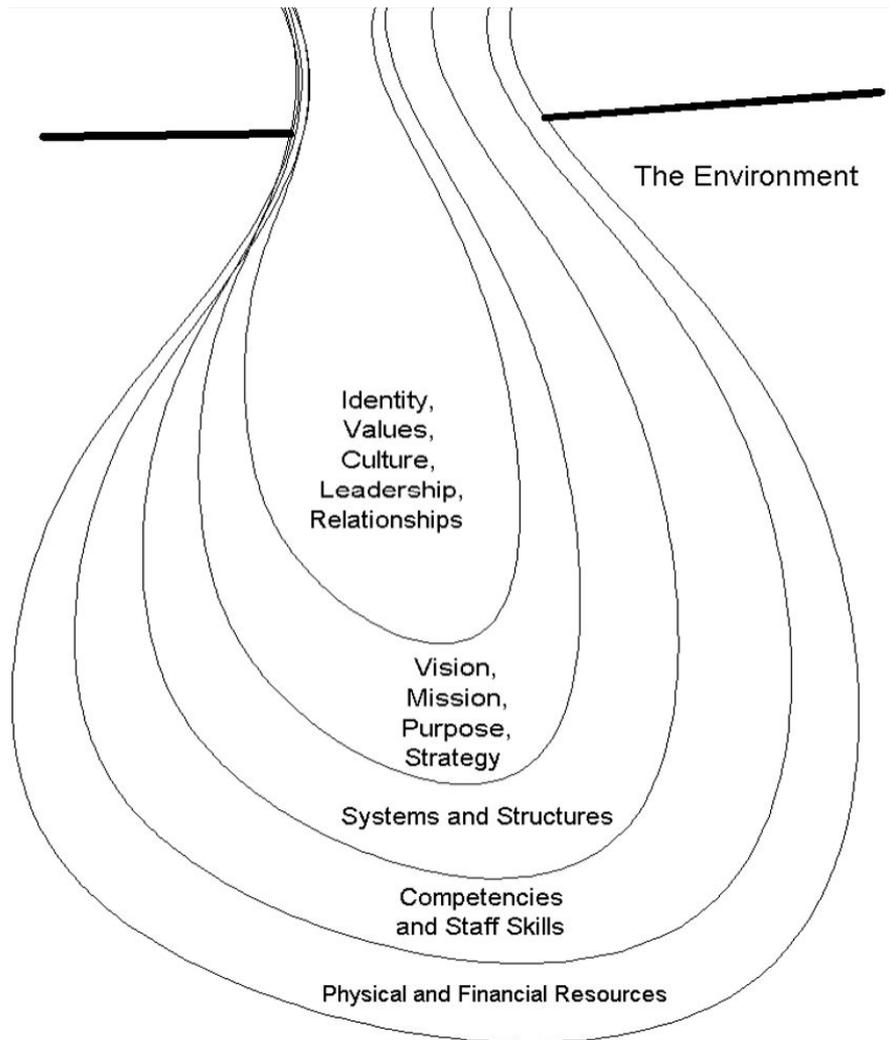
Sustainability

Multiplier effect:
- 33 informal community learning groups set up by parents and teachers so CwD received more educational support
- Parent Support Groups'(PSG) training in agriculture led to District provision of extension services and seed
- PSG members taking on leadership roles in local councils, PTAs, district disability associations

Areas to trace:
Continued embedding and strengthening MEL processes
- *How can USDC better bring out the role and voice of children in MEL?*
- *How can USDC monitor PSGs beyond project funding to sustain their support?*
- *How can USDC maintain MEL structures and systems beyond the AIAL funding?*
- *How can USDC influence and monitor local government budgeting for Inclusive Education?*

The Environment

Identity,
Values,
Culture,
Leadership,
Relationships

Vision,
Mission,
Purpose,
Strategy

Systems and Structures

Competencies
and Staff Skills

Physical and Financial Resources

Into the Heart of the Onion – Digging Deeper into What Makes for Effective OS

The **Onion model** emphasises the importance of ensuring that the heart of the organisation is sound before embarking on strengthening other layers.

Phase 1 Organisational Strengthening has helped partners relate better to their environment and influence it through collaboration and advocacy. Other changes have focused mainly in the three outer layers:

- The outside and most visible layer of the onion which represents the physical and financial resources that an organisation needs
- In the next layer are the human skills and knowledge required to carry out the work – the individual staff competencies and abilities
- Within that are the structures and systems (such as MEL, financial management, HR) needed to make the organisation work

If the centre is not strengthened, the outer layers and the organisation's holistic growth will be affected too
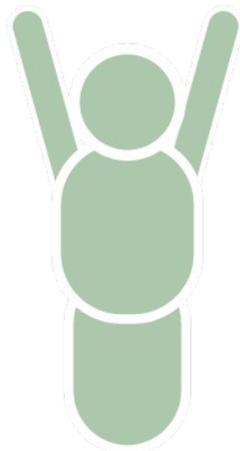
This raises a question for Phase 2:
How does the OS approach help partners dig into the heart of what they want to achieve and how; and most importantly their identity, values and culture?

(Onion model source: INTRAC James R 1998, 2020)

Organisational Strengthening Learning - Success Factors

A learning culture: organisations that have a reflective approach and make time for reflection are able to respond effectively to internal and external change, and apply their learning to improve and adapt accordingly e.g. **LABE's** internal reflection meetings and adaptive approach and **Able Child Africa** partners' development of organisational frameworks and measurement of the use of learning

Appropriate and empowering accompaniment: some partnership models support OS better: a UK partner with a strong focus on supporting capacity e.g. **ADD, Leonard Cheshire, Able Child Africa;** or an intermediary partner working with locally-based lead partners, consultants and staff e.g. **Firelight Foundation**

Compliance distinct from Organisational Strengthening: ensuring basics are planned for at assessment so partners have space for their own priorities; and linking to wider benefits e.g. strengthening MEL and financial management at organisational level (rather than project); linking MEL to evidence-based advocacy and financial management for new donor confidence

Quality funding and grant management: Comic Relief flexibility e.g. no-cost extension for **Signal** during COVID-19, support for core costs and core funding for **HakiElimu**; Organisation Development plans and budget (tracked as a project outcome e.g. **USDC and CST**); and support over phases of work

Opportunities for peer learning: South-to-South exchanges, e.g. **DDP** partners Ethiopia-India learning on financial management; AIAL networks in Malawi (led by **CYECE**) and Tanzania (led by **HakiElimu**) led to more collaboration and, in Tanzania, shared advocacy e.g. streamlining messages and collating evidence from grassroots to use and amplify voices

firelight™

In Jan 2018 Firelight Foundation received a **£1,654,000** AIAL grant over 24 months (ext. to Dec 2020).

This was a contribution to a long-term programme which ran to early 2021 co-funded by Conrad N. Hilton Foundation (from 2011) and Bainum Family Foundation (2015-2019)

Countries: Malawi, Tanzania, Zambia

Partners: 21 community organisations

Area of work (linked to AIAL ToC): Good quality ECD - grounding community organisations in local and international knowledge on ECD; providing operations grants, MEL support and other capacity building

COMMUNITIES CREATE A SAFE, STRONG AND NURTURING START FOR CHILDREN

The big story:
21 community organisations in Malawi, Tanzania and Zambia are now running stronger quality and more impactful ECD interventions in their communities. Comic Relief has partnered with an intermediary, Firelight Foundation, to give small, catalytic grants to those wanting to reach more vulnerable children effectively. Funding and support has helped community organisations learn new and more participatory play-based approaches; link to local community and government resources, services and partners; and plan for sustainability. As a result, ECD has come closer to home and is helping a large number of marginalised children receive better care and be ready for school. These small community organisations will continue to design and implement solutions for issues affecting children beyond any project funding.

The approach (capacity building, mentorship, peer learning and grants)
- Piloted and tested different models in different contexts (0-3 and 3-6); collected data to improve quality of learning and care; shared approaches and learning; accessed local and regional ECD networks (including AIAL)
- Variety of interventions responding to early school readiness, early infant child health and development, parental knowledge and skills, development of learning through play in a variety of community settings
- Started with specific models 'essential package' but changed to focus more on quality and depth
- Some capacity strengthening outside ECD e.g. safeguarding and protection, MEL and financial management
- Delivery of capacity building was through Lead Partners, consultants and regionally-based Firelight staff - learning from that model led to a shift to a multi-form mentoring model which Firelight currently uses

Success factors
- ★ Identification and selection of community organisations there for the long-term
- ★ Cluster approach builds networks and communities of practice for learning and sharing in context, and for collective advocacy and action
- ★ Communities co-drive and design solutions so capacity remains, even when the CBOs lack funding
- ★ Linking community organisations with networks and government at district and national level
- ★ Long-term investment: grants and capacity support (programmatic and organisation); peer mentoring
- ★ Well considered plan for graduating community organisation partners from Firelight support
- ★ Continuous high quality documentation of learning and willingness to re-examine and change approach

Empowered communities

- Increased community awareness of ECD and child development and the critical importance of the first 1000 days
- Increased demand for services and programmes for young children
- Positive care and development practices
- Communities demand accountability from government regarding policies, budget etc

Wider influence

- In Zambia, the Ministry of Education deploys teachers in ECD centres, supported by Firelight partners
- TAHEA in Tanzania influences guidelines on construction of community ECD centres
- In Malawi, CBOs participate in government working group

Changes for children

14,690 children aged 0-3, 17,237 aged 4-5 and 26,300 aged 6-12 indirectly benefit from improved school readiness, safe environments and nutrition
Note - tracking change for children was not part of AIAL outcomes which were all focused on CBOs but was reported by CBOs and included in case studies

FIRELIGHT IMPACT

Stronger, resilient community organisations with commitment to and capacity in ECD

21 local grassroots community organisations (11 in Tanzania, 5 in Zambia and 5 in Malawi) have become stronger, more resilient, and more professional; can identify and respond to community priority needs; mobilise communities on ECD issues; have a holistic understanding of what a child needs to develop well; and apply global and local ECD knowledge and best practice in their work and use this to inform decision-making and practice

'CBOs are catalytic in engaging and mobilising community action for ECD. With tools, resources and skills, CBOs can create measurable changes in the practices of parents and ECD centre caregivers'

Sustainability

Potential areas to trace linked to sustainability:

- Community organisation partners can leverage the technical skills and organisational capacity gained to continue mobilising and working with communities. Note: partners developed transition plans for this; and a one year follow-up to revisit a sample of partners is planned (funded by Conrad Hilton Foundation).
- Communities continue to design solutions for the issues affecting children in their community
- Continued support from relevant government ministries (deployment of teachers, health clinic services etc) and linkages with other networks and partners maintained/strengthened

Well-documented learning

about what affects early childhood and different systems drivers and what kinds of capacity building are helpful for CBOs - see
https://firelightfoundation.app.box.com/v/ECDLearningImpact
- the approach is now being rolled out to two new clusters of 13 new partner organisations in Zambia and Malawi

(statistics source: annual reports and external final evaluation)

38

Programme Effectiveness

Comic Relief Grant Making and Management

	What went well	What did not work so well
Programme set-up	In-country scoping and partner meetings, including shared development of the programme ToC Meetings with funders, government and networks Collaboration through AIAL networks led to peer learning, collaboration and joint advocacy MEL support from Comic Relief contracted agency at project set-up was valued by some partners (particularly those with already strong MEL systems)	Need for more intentional learning from CR history of work in education and other programmes e.g. learning from previous education studies on areas like empowerment, links to livelihoods, previous Uganda work Anticipating and planning for the collective impact of the programme (e.g. funding across a continuum - slide 15) versus individual projects External MEL support at project set-up unhelpful to some partners (e.g. some found it overwhelming and not well applied to their context) and not mentioned by most (partly due to turnover of staff)
Partnership models	Opportunity to try different partnership models UK and international partnerships worked well where the emphasis was on partner capacity, peer learning and accompaniment Direct funding to partners with past experience of Comic Relief or high capacity	More analysis needed about the different partnership models and how that influences how they are managed e.g. the relationship and MEL approach for intermediary partners as distinct to direct funding partners Direct funding proved a big burden for local partners without a strong donor reporting history and for CR - e.g. in one case requiring a physical visit from CR which was costly in time and resources
Comic Relief management	Friendly, flexible approach and willing to listen Helpful report feedback and visits valued Technical support in financial management and in safeguarding e.g. Humentum financial capacity building programme; CR visits and feedback	Report feedback too often focused on compliance Grant management depends on one person, causing delays in funding release and making the workload onerous for staff; some issues needing improvement could be better identified at assessment and then addressed through a supporting partner or local provider

(Information sources: feedback from partners in Zoom sessions and case studies; and evaluation team document review)

AIAL Networks

ABOUT THE NETWORKS…

The networks aim (FCDO rpt 2) to strengthen partner learning in AIAL areas of work and their capacity in evidence-based advocacy so they can contribute to lasting change and national/ international policy dialogue. Comic Relief encourages each to own and develop their own approach.

The AIAL network in Tanzania is hosted by HakiElimu and has been active since 2017.

In Malawi, the AIAL secretariat is now established, chaired by CYECE. It is finalising with Comic Relief a service contract, budget and work plan due March 2022.

In Uganda, eight learning network partners will finalise the formal development of the AIAL network in 2022.

Partners in Ethiopia, Zimbabwe, South Africa, Zambia, Ghana and Mali had no access to an AIAL network during Phase 1.

WHY THE AIAL NETWORK MODEL WORKED IN TANZANIA

Expert organisation (host)

HakiElimu was producing high quality evidence, had existing relationships in place with government and networks; and was highly skilled in advocacy.

It was motivated to work with members – it was a win-win for the host organisation and members.

The network began pre-COVID 19 - in-person activities and convenings helped build relationships and momentum.

HakiElimu's core funding enabled them to run the network; Comic Relief gave seed funding for the network and covered other costs of in-person meetings and research.

EXTERNAL LEARNING ABOUT NETWORKS

The strength/skills and experience of the host needs to be well linked to the purpose of the network i.e. *is the main purpose advocacy, research, learning for individual members?*

Proper analysis of, and opportunities to link with and add value to, existing networks is important both before set-up and for joint learning, advocacy and future steps.

Sufficient resourcing needs to be provided for the time and effort of running a network and keeping members engaged in events, research and advocacy.

It is important to think through network future plans beyond funding from the start - *What skills, information, connections do network members have that can continue, with or without CR funding, and how can these best be supported?*

(information sources: partner and Comic Relief feedback sessions; case study interviews; document review - and external learning from INTRAC - see Annex 1)

AIAL NETWORK AMPLIFIES COMMUNITY VOICES TO DRIVE SYSTEMIC CHANGE

Who: HakiElimu –
a Tanzanian research, advocacy and campaigning NGO

Partners:
HakiElimu works through its 'Friends of Education' movement

Grant: May 2017 AIAL grant of **£500,000** over 36 months – instead of funding a project, '*core funding*' contributes to their total organisational strategy and budget

In February 2020, this was extended by **£300,000** over 24 months

Country: Tanzania – 22 districts

Area of work (linked to AIAL ToC): systems change across all areas, influencing education policy and practice for inclusive education – in both primary and secondary schools

Evidence: *strong reports with reliable, high quality data, external mid-term review and staff case study session*

The big story:
Hosting the AIAL network has enabled HakiElimu to create **"a culture of shared learning and collaboration in advocacy"** – the President's Office invited partners to review the national inclusive education strategy (NIES). HakiElimu has influenced the NIES and the Education and Training Policy so the whole system works better to include children with disability and girls – and to protect everyone from violence. It has helped persuade government to allow teen mothers back to school. It has set up 'Gender and Violence Against Girls' (VAC) Clubs in 127 schools to give space for children's voice – a model recently approved by a government inter-ministerial task force. This Comic Relief core funding grant has given HakiElimu the flexibility to adapt its advocacy strategy and activities to a rapidly changing context – a shift of government to Dodoma, increasingly draconian laws and COVID-19 – and still achieve impact.

The approach: "you have to be part of the schools, work with the community, listen to what they tell you"
HakiElimu works through evidence-based advocacy that links children, families and schools with government policy and practice. A movement of 42,000 volunteers 'Friends of Education', initiated by HakiElimu, mentors and supports 127 primary and secondary schools. They monitor performance and expenditure; run dialogues on child violence, inclusion, planning and teaching; and feed back data in surveys and social media. HakiElimu amplifies community voices through research, working with the media to do investigative journalism, tracking educational expenditure, running campaigns and getting other partners on board. It has hosted AIAL network meetings and trained partners in advocacy.

Success factors:
★ Rooted in the community and linking their experience to national advocacy
★ A strong relationship with government, adapting the advocacy strategy from criticising to consulting through involvement in key structures and groups
★ Relevant to country policies and programmes - and aligned to children's needs
★ A collaborative culture through the AIAL network and other partnerships that amplifies voices further
★ Comic Relief's core funding has enabled HakiElimu to maximise their strategic focus and adapt their strategy to the changing context – *but means achievements are only partly attributable to AIAL*

Collective learning

- AIAL Tanzania network led to the President's Office inviting partners to review the the National Inclusive Education Strategy and action plan
  - Two studies led by HakiElimu documented the evidence that AIAL partners are using to influence national policy: 'Education We Want' and Access to Inclusive Pre-Primary Education for CwD
    - HakiElimu helped other AIAL network members link to national and regional education coalitions e.g. OCODE (Firelight's partner and CST (Able Child Africa's partner)

Organisational Strengthening

- Developed new policies including whistle-blowing and on the environment
- Completed participatory Gender audit to assess gaps in gender policy and practice
- Strengthening MEL through mobile technology for real-time reporting by community

Officials and systems

- National Inclusive Education Strategy: contributed to content for better inclusion and simplified Swahili version for communities; strengthened implementation by training local councils to monitor plans and budgets
- Government agreed to review gaps in the Education and Training Policy highlighted by HakiElimu - in principle, teen mothers are now allowed back back in school - though this is still a work in progress
- Inter-Ministerial taskforce accepted the Gender and Violence against Children Club (Gender and VAC) model
- Over $200,000 recovered for education by tracking expenditure and MPs more engaged in budgeting

HakiElimu IMPACT
(multi-donor funded)

Sustainability

Multiplier effect:
- 23 schools invested in construction of classrooms, dormitories, latrines, boreholes benefitting 4,339 students
- 74% started school feeding programmes

Communities actively engaged

- 42,000 volunteers in Friends of Education more deeply engaged, raising awareness and promoting school and community action
- Raised awareness in COVID-19 on prevention, how to leverage online learning and about child protection
- Inclusive education campaign for CwD

Outcomes for children

- 127 Gender and VAC Clubs giving voice to children – sharing successes and challenges, improving safety, lifeskills, sexual and reproductive health
- Girls and boys improved attendance (girls from 75% to 85%) and reduced drop-out
- Increased reporting of cases of violence and action taken by authorities

(statistics source: yr4 report, yr 5 six-month report and case study information)

Areas to trace:
What does sustainability look like for the Tanzania AIAL network?
- *What impact and learning is sustained?*
- *In what form, if any, will it continue to support learning and influence government over Phase 2?*

How well are the voices of children reaching and influencing government?
- *Is this model of the clubs being taken to scale?*
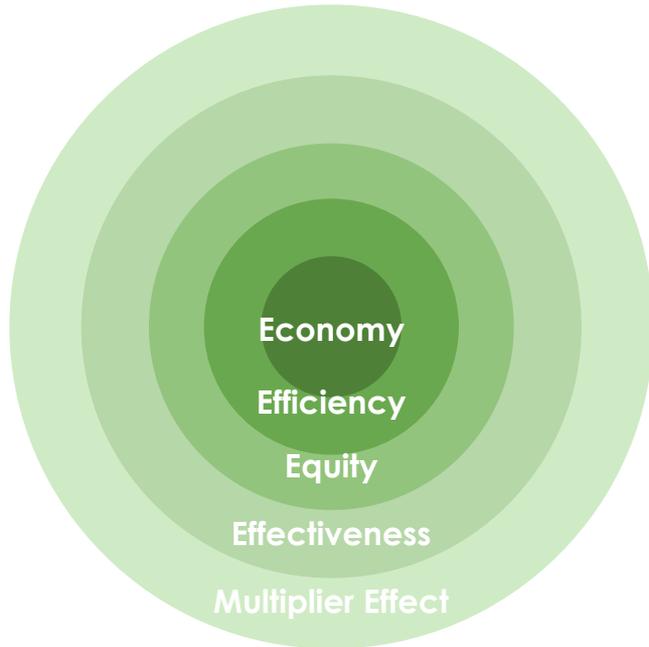- *How is government integrating life skills and sexual and reproductive health?*

Value for Money for Projects

AIAL evolving understanding of Value for Money:
The 2015 AIAL business case sets out the DFID framework of economy, efficiency and effectiveness, adding equity as an important factor (qualities evidenced in AIAL - see right). In 2019, Comic Relief reviewed its approach (slide 46), moving towards a more nuanced partner-owned approach - which the evaluation further evolves (slide 45).

Economy: careful use of resources e.g. **ADD** locally-made teaching materials; **Able Child/ CST Tanzania** learning exchange combined with joint advocacy

Efficiency: delivering maximum outputs for use of resources e.g. **VSO** developed cost analysis models for digital education, including delivery partnerships

Equity: benefiting everyone, including most marginalised e.g. **Chance for Childhood** focus on street-connected mothers and their young children

Effectiveness: collaboration of AIAL networks for advocacy impact e.g. data laws in Tanzania; embedded in government priorities; rooted in communities
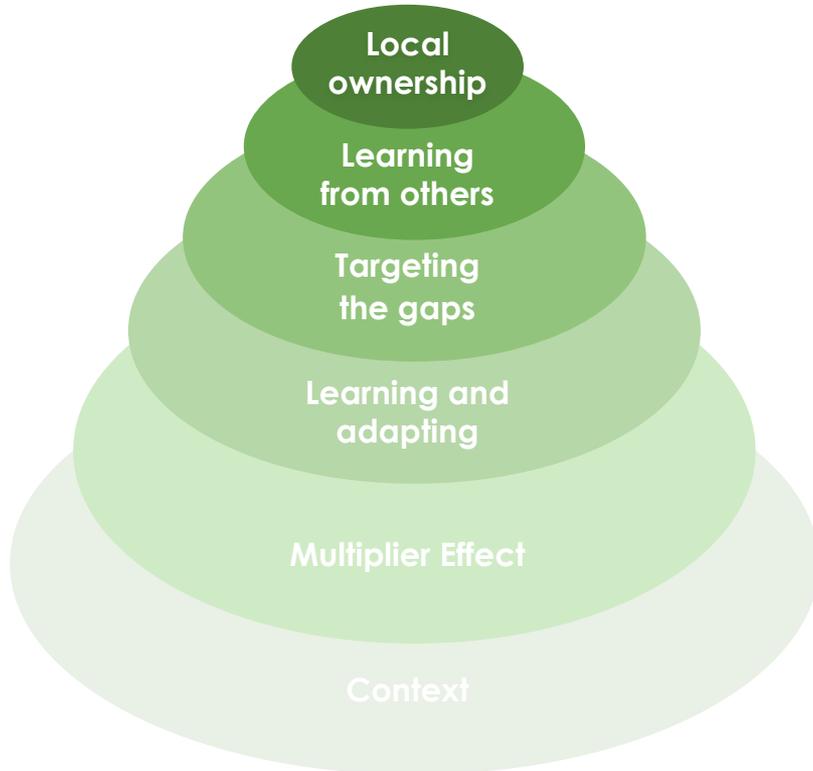
Multiplier effect:
- builds on existing initiatives
- adapts to context and new learning
- grows organically
- adopted and implemented by others

- **Economy**
- **Efficiency**
- **Equity**
- **Effectiveness**
- **Multiplier Effect**

Sustainability is built into all the layers – and also begins with long-term vision and joint planning that catalyses the system from the outset - not beginning and ending with the project

(information source: document review, including grant documents & FCDO reports; case studies, feedback from partners and CR learning session)

What Value for Money Looks Like in Practice - Enabling Sustainability

Local ownership

Learning from others

Targeting the gaps

Learning and adapting

Multiplier Effect

Context

Transforming traditional Value for Money (VFM) concepts:
Learning from AIAL shows that local ownership at the core ensures that those benefitting value the work. This in turn enables harnessing of local resources, creativity in their use and sustained involvement of local structures, until approaches becomes part and parcel of what community and government do. The evaluation case studies are good examples of this.

Economy: developing a shared long-term vision and ownership right from the start – involving and agreeing roles with children, schools, community, government

+ **Efficiency:** learning from others to sharpen partners' own experience and local ownership, thus ensuring the most effective approaches are used

+ **Equity:** targeting the gaps to reach children who are most left out and address needs that are most critical and relevant to government and community

+ **Effectiveness:** constantly learning and adapting, making space for reflection and applying learning to improve the effectiveness of approaches

+ **Multiplier effect:** adopted and implemented by others

= Sustainability

(information source: evaluation team analysis from document review, feedback from partners and in-depth case studies)

Programme Value for Money

	What went well	What did not work so well
Programme set-up	- Focus on some countries to maximise understanding of the context, shared learning, advocacy, management, visits etc. - Systemic emphasis of Theory of Change enhances sustainability and provides value for money	- Created competition for staffing in Malawi and led to increase in costs - Need to get money out the door detracts from learning from other programmes and strong consultation/ research as the basis for project development
Partnership models	- Added value of effective UK or locally-based partners - Direct funding to partners with past experience of Comic Relief or high capacity	- Questions about value for money in multi-layered partnerships with international funding partners - Cost-benefit for Comic Relief in time investment needed to support direct funding partners with less experience
Comic Relief management	- Analysing cost effectiveness from assessment onward and through reporting feedback - CR reviewed its approach to value for money to look at partners' own approach; cost-conscious budgeting; and impact, with continuous adaptation and improvement - CR communications adds value by amplifying partner voices and learning e.g. AIAL Malawi films shared on Facebook, Twitter and CR website - New Social Impact Committee since 2018 sits bi-monthly and provides accountability for value for money	- Is costly investment in international training providers or in Comic Relief's own technical support time, however effective, better value for money than locally available and skilled accompaniment which is more likely to continue beyond project funding? - Economy in staffing has led to over-dependence on very few AIAL Programme staff, **sometimes impacting funded partners and causing project delays because of late disbursement of funds**

(information source: evaluation team analysis from document review, feedback from partners and in-depth case studies)

Conclusion
Programme Relevance

Back

Programme Theory of Change

How helpful and relevant

Justification for the programme: programme business case shows strategic need to invest in inclusive education and the four areas of focus

Outcomes at children's and systemic level proved valid; a good number of projects increased their focus on family livelihoods and food security and provided some improved data on learning and empowerment

Project and programme success factors: AIAL documents highlight some underlying beliefs about how the programme will achieve impact e.g. in grantmaking and management, technical support and Organisational Strengthening

Theory of Change (ToC) representation: the evaluation is surfacing with Comic Relief and partners some of these underlying beliefs about success factors that can feed into a revised version of the Theory of Change

Using and adapting the ToC: the evaluation demonstrates that projects aligned to the ToC remained relevant, despite the changing context. Some CR report feedback used the ToC as a framework. CR adjusted the ToC to include livelihoods/ food security after the Mid-Term Review

What was missing or assumed

Research underpinning the programme was not updated since 2015 e.g. through a context review. Evaluation partner feedback and Reference Group has added real value about context and priorities (slide 11), feeding into the analysis and recommendations

While more projects show an element of empowering children, many did not address this or child protection – *how do they become part of every project's bottom line?*

The ToC does not draw out learning about how outcomes are achieved at children's and systemic level by the projects (see slide 49), so partners can apply them to their context e.g. the value of planning across the continuum of education

The ToC does not draw out Comic Relief's core assumptions about how it supports this whole change process e.g. Organisational Strengthening; collective learning; quality of funding and support; and relationships

CR updated the ToC only once since 2015 after the MTR. The evaluation has surfaced some gaps above, validated through the evaluation process and included in the conclusions for Comic Relief to review for an updated Phase 2 ToC

The Missing 'How' of the AIAL Theory of Change

PROJECT SUCCESS FACTORS

Targeting the gaps

- Ensuring space and activities for effective analysis and voice of children at all stages
- Focusing on who is left out/ marginalised
- Making work highly relevant to the context and children's needs

Taking a systemic approach

- Generating shared ownership by co-creating work with children and stakeholders
- Embedding in government by aligning to priorities and focusing advocacy
- Effective monitoring, learning and adaptation

Thinking and acting beyond boundaries

- Holistic: linking to physical, social, emotional etc wellbeing
- Life-cycle: thinking about transition across all levels of education and in livelihoods
- Phases of work and funding: enabling work to evolve and progress over time

Children's participation and empowerment is the foundation for understanding and achieving the success factors

FUNDER SUPPORT SUCCESS FACTORS

Investing in programme set-up

- Meeting with key stakeholders: government, donors, networks, potential partners
- Facilitating development of a shared ToC that builds in learning from experience and from external research
- Supporting MEL tailored to organisational and local context

Quality funding and grant management

- Supporting core costs and Organisational Strengthening
- Ensuring partners build in a significant consultation phase
- Taking a friendly, flexible, listening approach e.g. budget adaptation
- Funding work over phases

Effective Organisational Strengthening

- Identifying and helping develop partners with a learning culture
- Separating strategies for compliance from wider OS
- Supporting partnership models that enable empowering accompaniment
- Providing and facilitating opportunities for peer learning

(information source: drawn together from the whole evaluation analysis, including a participatory ToC review with the Comic Relief AIAL team)

Way Forward

Emerging Recommendations for Partners from Phase 1

These recommendations reflect partner, Comic Relief, Reference Group and evaluation team analysis of the findings - and are relevant for partners (this slide) and for funders (slide 52) beyond the AIAL programme

Set up for sustainability

1. Target the gaps and ensure work is highly relevant to the context and children's needs e.g. in reach to different groups of children, in resourcing and in government policy and implementation

2. Take a systemic approach by building in a significant consultation phase, activating local resources and structures, co-creating work with children and key stakeholders; and aligning/embedding in government
   - Think about how you play a catalytic role to get others playing their part and create local shared ownership
   - Build into your plans and budgets in-depth consultation to make this happen

Grow strong, resilient organisations

1. Use the Onion model to self-assess and prioritise hidden areas of culture, leadership and mission (Phase 2 partners consider using this to monitor your OS during and beyond AIAL funding)

2. Reflect, adapt and stay nimble to respond to shocks e.g. COVID-19 and embrace new opportunities e.g. digital
   - Create space for creative team reflection to identify opportunities created by the changing context and how to mitigate challenges
   - Become more proactive in negotiating with donors e.g. to realign budgets and plans or to negotiate core funding

3. Find good accompaniment support, as needed, that enables you to reflect on and tackle issues at the heart of the Onion model, as well as manage complex funder processes

Enable effectiveness

1. Create space for children's voice enabling them to analyse priority outcomes and actions, assess progress, and advocate on their own behalf, and act on what you learn - make sure you use participatory monitoring tools that allow this to happen

2. Think beyond boundaries - holistically about children's wellbeing and about key transition points; and take a phased approach enabling work to evolve and progress over time
   - Involve key stakeholders from the consultation phase in reviewing their roles and triangulating children's analysis
   - Identify and develop partnerships for effective information-sharing and referrals

Emerging Recommendations for Funders from Phase 1

Set up for sustainability

1. Make sustainability and learning from other programmes a key part of programme set-up, continuing to invest in scoping, meetings, ToC development - but also integrating learning more visibly from other Comic Relief programmes and from external African-led research

2. Include in the ToC the **how** based on external, Comic Relief and partner learning (including the core beliefs about how change happens and what CR does to support that - currently in the business case)

3. Continue the positive shift towards a funding approach that enables partners to plan for sustainability and continues to fund core costs and Organisational Strengthening
   - Look at options for building in more space for a significant consultation phase to support local ownership
   - Consider more core funding with criteria developed for who is eligible and a minimum % contribution to the total budget

Grow strong, resilient organisations - *make it happen!*

1. Separate compliance and OS, focusing on picking up compliance issues at assessment and in handover to Comic Relief to give space for transformational OS at the heart of the onion

2. Be intentional about funding OS support that is holistic and systemic and gets into the inner layers of the onion, making the Onion model part of information shared pre-application; and continue supporting partners through local OS providers that align to the new OS model

3. Recognise that different types of funding relationship need different management and MEL
   - Continue funding different models for different reach and outcomes
   - Create different expectations, relationships and information needs e.g. from intermediary partners; avoid changing the goalposts

4. Align MEL support to partner needs, simplifying reporting and feedback; and use a two-stop system to release funding more quickly to partners (for compliance and feedback)

Enable effectiveness

1. Strengthen relationship management by reviewing report forms and CR feedback forms to focus on the most important things related to impact and learning to encourage a more collaborative partnership approach

2. Use local support/ accompaniment rather than relying on CR technical input
   - Ensure at assessment that appropriate support is included, as needed, to bridge the gap between capacity and donor demands e.g. international or local support
   - Be realistic about time constraints of Comic Relief staff, sharing roles across the team and maximising local support approaches

3. Create opportunities for peer learning for all, continuing to fund and encourage partner exchanges etc; and consider running one or two virtual meetings for all programme partners annually

Five Things Comic Relief Can Do in Phase 2

1

Prioritise children's empowerment with partners
Share the AIAL evaluation tool (or other tools) to help partners listen to children (and caregivers), strengthen their safety and influence, and jointly analyse priorities for action and advocacy

2

Trust the OS Phase 2 approach
to invest in OS and grant-management that is about transformation (reaches the heart of the onion) and gives ownership.
Walk the talk and be intentional about funding it

3

Revise the ToC
to include the 'how' (slide 49) and continue to update it annually, based on learning

4

Accompany the AIAL networks
Apply the evaluation learning to think about Comic Relief's role in Phase 2, including for the set-up of the Uganda network: *What is the network's purpose? How do they link with and add value to existing networks? Are they properly resourced?*

5

Apply learning to Comic Relief's broader strategy
Think through the relevance of AIAL learning for other programmes - Rise and Shine; Shift the Power; and for different ways of funding (funding directly, intermediary, UK-based)

What Happens Next - Evaluation Phase 2

2022-2023 evaluation activities

Reference Group meetings

1. Refine and agree on Phase 2 approach with Reference Group and Comic Relief

2. Tracer case study set-up with Phase 1 partners (including discussion about tools)

3. Brief context review to understand educational opportunities and trends

4. Launch Phase 2 in Sept 2022 (tbc)

5. Desk review of Phase 1 extension and Phase 2 projects (2022-2023)

6. Tracer case study follow-up, including primary research where possible and triangulation with other stakeholders

7. Peer learning session with partners

8. Analysis session with partners, networks, Comic Relief and FCDO

9. Final report and dissemination, including in-country sessions (Oct-Nov 2023)

About the Evaluation Team

Cathy James (team lead) is British with ten years experience of living and working in Malawi. Cathy brings specific expertise in quality inclusive education; participatory facilitation; learning networks; theory of change analysis and development; and evaluation.

Doreen Kwarimpa-Atim is a Ugandan Organisation Development specialist who works with organisations in East Africa. Doreen is experienced in facilitating learning reviews, carrying out evaluations and capacity strengthening.

Elita Chamdimba is a Malawian university based social research specialist who brings expertise in planning and managing research activities, data analysis, report writing and dissemination. Elita is Founder of Little Big Prints in Malawi which empowers girls to speak out about inclusive education.

Isabel Turner is British with working experience across sub-Saharan Africa. Isabel brings experience in quality education and systems, ECD, gender, and organisational development; as well as complex, multi-country evaluations and different types of funding partnerships.