Narrative Report

Hewlett Foundation

Global learning collaborative to link learning and practice for greater transparency and accountability.

2018-6847

Center for Law, Justice and Society
DEJUSTICIA
www.dejusticia.org

January 24th 2018

NARRATIVE REPORT (HEWLETT FOUNDATION) – 24 January 2019
LEARNING COLLABORATIVE

Summary:
- The Learning Collaborative two-year pilot (2018-19) has three overarching outcomes. First is to clarify how attention to organizational learning practices can improve transparency, accountability, and participation (TAP) field practice, building particularly on the expertise of CSOs working in the global south. Second is to deliver productive learning exchanges targeted to practitioner needs, and testing the hypothesis that learning is enhanced through a peer-based, collaborative model. And third, to inform and influence the broader TAP field and philanthropic actors on effective learning approaches.
- In the first half of 2018 efforts were focused on jointly designing a framework within which the group will operate. This included developing a common theory of change for the Collaborative, a broad workplan focusing on Hub's strengths and activities, and a corresponding Results Framework. In the second half of 2018 we focused on going deeper within each Hub to understand its current learning practices and be able to devote Collaborative resources to strengthening those, and, moreover, building collaborative bridges across hubs in the shape of joint learning projects.
- We find that the Hubs were able to accelerate their own learning activities in 2018. In some cases, they were also able to accelerate learning within their pre-existing networks. The most challenging component of the LC has been the design of collaborative-level learning efforts, and linking with the TAP field. Key lessons here include that interest and commitment to learning are essential but not sufficient; it takes time and a concerted facilitation effort to define meaningful common ground between very different organizations so that a joint design can emerge. The importance of building trust between learning partners cannot be under-estimated, and in-person time is essential for this.
- We ended 2018 with a series of collaborative projects poised to fully come into being in 2019. We have plans to support these, and also to step up our efforts to communicate our experiences in shaping the Collaborative, as well as the TAP content of the projects, more proactively in 2019. Remaining ambitious, we are also realistic as to what we can achieve during the two year incubation period of the Collaborative.

1. **Describe the activities/outputs you conducted/generated during the past year. Please compare these activities/outputs to the expected activities/outputs in your grant proposal.**

Below we present hub-specific activities towards which Learning Collaborative resources were devoted. Activities reported here are those which enhanced the learning within the Hub, those which enhanced learning in the Hub's own network, and those which linked bilaterally across Hubs. Collaborative-level activities are presented in the subsequent section.

1.1. **Hub-level activities**

1.1.1. Centro de Estudios para la Equidad y Gobernanza en Sistemas de Salud (CEGSS)

- As part of the LC plan, CEGSS set up a process to reflect on current efficacy and design a new overall strategy for CEGSS and REDC-SALUD, a Network of Community Defenders for the Right to Health.[1] Within this process a new activity arose: the need for an information campaign to change the narrative on the profile and purpose of the health defenders, to counteract the effect of widespread mis-information (sometimes combined with threats). This was identified as priority by the grassroots health defenders

---

[1] REDC-SALUD is a rural indigenous network made up by over 150 community leaders in Guatemala trained and supported by CEGSS. The Network monitors public health services, presents the collected evidence to authorities to resolves issues and refers cases of serious violations of rights to government and other state institutions.

- themselves. CEGSS supported REDC-SALUD in the entire process of design, organizing and carrying the implementation, as well as assessing the achievements of the campaign.
- Strategic learning platforms were upgraded, including the digital security and web-based platform which collects complaints about failures in health care delivery from 35 municipalities, and is an essential component to the program's ability to listen to – and adapt the programmatic response – to real concerns experienced by health service users. The websites of both CEGSS (www.cegss.org.gt) and REDC-SALUD (www.vigilanciaysalud.org) were also upgraded to improve communication and advocacy.
- At the cluster level, CEGSS participated in the Twaweza strategic review meeting in Dar es Salaam and provided input into drafting of the new strategy. For global reach, CEGSS organized a panel during the World Bank's Global Program in Social Accountability (GPSA) Annual Meeting with the Accountability Research Center (ARC), including a community leader from REDC-SALUD.

1.1.2. Dejusticia

- Dejusticia designed and is piloting a new organizational learning system and hired a Learning Officer responsible for facilitating Collaborative activities. At the end of 2018, Dejusticia conducted learning sessions across twelve thematic and administrative teams in the organization; the reparatory documents and outcomes are now feeding into its upcoming new strategy and organizational changes to help Dejusticia undertake a deeper and more expansive programming across its different thematic areas of work.
- Dejusticia Connect was launched, an app that brings together alumni from our courses to track their work after participation and aims to build a stronger network for connection and reflection. Currently, the app has 139 active users, with a vast majority of alumni (83%) expressing willingness to mentor and provide support to their fellow graduates and with regular updates by the users that indicate news about their work and projects. This is a significant improvement in Dejusticia's ability to track course participant and the impact of their participation.
- In partnership with MIT GOV/LAB, Dejusticia delivered a session at the sixth Global Action-Research Workshop for Young Human Rights Advocates from the Global South, which had a specific focus on learning and impact by the human rights movement. Finally, Dejusticia's plan of extending its capacity on learning obtained from the new mechanism instituted through this grant has not yet taken off. As opposed to previous years when Dejusticia and selected Latin American partner organizations engaged in a coordinated campaign in the region, which they had planned to use as a space to share experiences with its learning efforts, there was no similar opportunity in 2018.

1.1.3. Global Integrity

- Global Integrity designed and implemented its first organization-wide monitoring, evaluation, and learning (MEL) system. This new MEL system allows GI to generate systematic evidence on whether and how their work was contributing effective solutions to governance problems in various countries. They then fed those lessons into adjustments to GI's work plans and organizational, programmatic, and project strategies, in order to improve their impact and effectiveness, and provide more effective support to their partners.
- At the cluster level, GI strengthened learning support partnerships with four civil society organizations: CRECO in Kenya, Tamasha in Tanzania, Burocratas in Colombia and CIVICUS. These partnerships facilitate problem analysis exercises, support the design and use of theories of change, construct MEL frameworks, and facilitate reflection and adaptation to feed lessons into the organizations' work.
- Connecting with regional and global networks, GI worked with the Public Service Accountability Monitor (based in South Africa and supporting a group of Sub-Saharan accountability CSOs) to design and facilitate a learning workshop for the members of its Regional Learning Program. GI also carried out select advocacy efforts, focused in particular on the Open Government Partnership and its stakeholders, aimed at strengthening the extent to which the Partnership encourages and supports learning among its members.

1.1.4. Twaweza

- Twaweza convened an "Ideas&Evidence" event with a wide audience composed of both practitioners and researchers, including all the Learning Collaborative members, to review its current MEL and research strategy to date, and source ideas for future work. This event, held in early 2018, provided critical inputs into the overall organizational strategy, which the organization developed through the rest of the year (and delivered at end of 2018).
- Held a bilateral learning exchange between Dejusticia & Twaweza on strategic litigation. This included a senior Dejusticia litigation staff conducting an in-person workshop with Twaweza as well as a number of Twaweza's CSO partners in Tanzania. This event contributed to strategic litigation becoming an integral part of Twaweza's new strategy.
- Within its own network, Twaweza developed an in-depth learning structure to support a grassroots partner Tamasha – a youth-focused organization working on community mobilizing in Tanzania. There are plans for 2019 to harmonize the learning structures and support between Global Integrity and Twaweza, as both collaborate with Tamasha on local-level accountability work. Further exchanges that were planned to strengthen Twaweza's learning within its own network did not take place in 2018, but discussions and plans continue in 2019.

1.2. **Collaborative-Level Activities**

At the Collaborative level, first half of 2018 efforts were focused on jointly designing a framework within which the group will operate. The pivotal point was an in-person meeting of the Collaborative members in February, in Bogota. The key outputs that resulted from that meeting and subsequent follow-up work are listed below (and included as Annexes):

- An overarching Theory of Change of the Learning Collaborative (with intermediary and long-term goals) that establishes a common vision on the ambitions of the Collaborative. See Annex 1.
- A Results Framework. See Annex 2.
- A workplan that included activities at the organizational, cluster and Collaborative levels (can be provided upon request).
- A blog introducing the Collaborative hosted on the TAI website (explaining also who are the Hub organizations and who are the Resource Organizations)

In the second half of 2018 we focused on going deeper within each Hub to understand its current learning practices and to be able to devote Collaborative resources to strengthening those. And furthermore, we focused on building learning bridges across hubs in the shape of joint learning projects, which are key to testing the hypothesis that collaborative learning between practitioner organizations has value added above and beyond bilateral learning support. Pivotal in this phase was the decision to hold a second in-person meeting in Cambridge, although only one had been planned for 2018. We expand on the reasons for this in the section on "lessons learned," but in short, we realized that more in-person time was needed to build trust and common ground between the Hubs. Key activities and outputs of this phase include:

- In-depth organizational learning assessments conducted with three implementing Hubs (Twaweza's is forthcoming), conducted jointly by a member of GOV/LAB and the Facilitator. Each assessment took multiple days and included in-person visits to the Hubs and detailed discussions with a range of staff, covering the following areas: (a) organizational strategizing and setting of theories of change, (b) monitoring practices and use of data, (c) evaluation practices, (d) staff and organizational strengths (or needs) in engaging meaningfully with MEL, (e) learning and reflection opportunities within each organization, and (f) identifying areas for potential links and collaborative research with other Hubs.
- During the Cambridge meeting in October, five learning projects were co-designed, each including two or more of the Collaborative members. Three have substantive energy behind them and are being converted into concept notes (by early 2019) and are planned to be implemented in 2019. These are (1) working with

- allies in government in the context of closing civil society space (CEGSS, Twaweza, ARC); (2) use of strategic litigation in TAP (Dejusticia, Twaweza, GOV/LAB); and (3) learning-centered, adaptive MEL methods among frontline / grassroots organizations (Global Integrity, CEGSS, GOV/LAB). Potentially there are two more which could develop further in 2019: exploring new models of how practitioners and academics learn together, and identifying TAP bottlenecks in service delivery.
- The role of the Resource organizations has become clarified as well. The LC was designed to give practitioners center stage in deciding on key topics for collaboration and areas of inquiry; the two academic members – The Accountability Research Center at American University and MIT GOV/LAB – act as co-design and co-implementation partners. Their strengths come out in the collaborative projects in which the academic members help contextualize the initiatives (e.g. by situating within the knowledge gaps of the TAP field), and help to shape the questions and methods. MIT GOV/LAB also engaged a "practitioner in residence" in 2018 (see section on changes, below, for more detail) to further support collaborative-wide efforts; this additional function was integral in conducting the organizational learning assessments as well as the generation of the collaborative projects.
- A communications plan for reaching to the wider TAP field was crafted during the Cambridge meeting; it is currently being reviewed and finalized and will be implemented in 2019.

2. **Describe the progress you have made toward achieving the intermediate and ultimate outcomes you set forth in your proposal. Has your work resulted in any additional outcomes?**

We list the main outcomes below (as per our TOC and Results Framework) and reflect on each in turn.

2.1. Collaborative CSOs deepen their own organizational learning, monitoring, and evaluation capacity.

We have been able to make significant progress towards this outcome primarily through conducting the detailed Learning Assessments. Three (of the 4) implementing hubs received a detailed Learning Assessment of their MEL infrastructure and processes, with concrete suggestions for priority improvements. (These took place later than intended due to unforeseen personnel changes at Dejusticia; the fourth assessment is planned for early 2019). All hubs which conducted the assessment reported that it was useful in reflecting on their own strategic direction, their current MEL strengths and priority areas for improvement, and possibilities for linking with other Hubs for cross-organizational learning. The assessment for Dejusticia is attached as Annex 3, which highlights that the Hubs are engaging meaningfully with areas of success as well as failure (please note this is a document internal to the Learning Collaborative and should not be shared beyond this report). Moreover, three hubs have in 2018 developed new organizational strategies (Dejusticia is embarking on this in early 2019), and these processes were enriched through the Collaborative assessments and conversations.

2.2. The Collaborative fosters an enabling environment for adaptive learning within and across networks of TAP organizations.

Two of the Hubs (CEGSS and Global Integrity) were very active in furthering adaptive learning across their existing networks of partners. Two others (Twaweza and Dejusticia) were not able to carry out the activities as planned under this category (refer to section on specific organizational activities). Within the LC we are experimenting with various ways in which a Collaborative can foster such learning. For instance, i.e., conducting in person and in-depth learning assessments, on the basis of which further joint activities can be designed that correspond to needs uncovered during assessment. We expect that in 2019, the Hubs will be able to apply this and other mechanisms within their own networks. We also hypothesize that taking part in the discussions and exchanges within the LC enables the participating Hubs to have new ideas and approaches to how to best support learning among their own networks. We will track and document whether and how this actually happens through 2019.

2.3.   The Collaborative clarifies and documents effective learning strategies to strengthen transparency and accountability programming and drive better practice and concrete TAP outcomes.

This outcome is the focus of the upcoming Collaborative-level projects for 2019. These are (1) working with allies in government in the context of closing civil society space; (2) use of strategic litigation in TAP; and (3) learning-centered, adaptive MEL methods among frontline / grassroots organizations (plus potentially two others which need further development in 2019). These projects are currently in a process of peer review by the LC; we expect them to be initiated in the first quarter of 2019. We are confident that each one of these will generate knowledge on effective learning practices as well as new evidence relevant to the TAP field, but we do want to be realistic in our expectations. The projects have been designed with one-year timeframes in mind, and are themselves pilots in collaboration between like-minded but quite different organizations. Our objective is to track and describe analytically and honestly how they fare – both to understand whether they further TAP outcomes and whether they further organizational learning.

2.4.   The collaborative experience informs the broader TAP field.

This is a longer-term outcome; the lessons generated through the collaborative projects in 2019 will be an important component of achieving this outcome, and we expect to report more fully on this in the end-of-project report. However, we recognize that there are already lessons we have generated that could usefully inform the TAP field – not so much (yet) on the content of TAP, but certainly on what it takes to get a collaborative learning group going. We intend to start actively sharing our reflections as well as progress on ongoing collaborative projects in 2019 through our new communications strategy (we will strive to diversify it through learning reflections, blogs, vlogs, etc.). We will also look for opportunities to share our progress at events such as the World Bank's GPSA, and other convenings.

3.   **Describe any major changes that have occurred during the past year within your organization or outside of your organization (e.g., in the community, the political landscape, etc.) that have had or will have an impact on the work supported by the grant (or, in the case of general support, on the work of the organization or the program). How have you responded to these changes, or how do you plan to respond to these changes?**

In the case of two Hubs – CEGSS in Guatemala and Twaweza in Tanzania – the socio-political context took a turn for the worse with further decreases to civic space, break-down of the rule of law and political instability leading to clamp-down on TAP activities by authorities. The organizations have had to devote considerable energies just to ensure that they could continue their work, as well as re-designing and re-imagining their initiatives to correspond to the socio-political shifts. The re-design and re-imagination in particular are excellent demonstrations of these organizations' capacities to learn and adapt, however, responding to such contextual challenges does mean that fewer energies can be devoted to learning that is not directly tied to keeping the organization alive and relevant in difficult times. Going forward, the Collaborative is willing to adapt our activities so that they are supportive of organizations in challenging contexts, and we plan to track whether this is the case through 2019.

A non-trivial challenge internal to the Collaborative has been the turnover of the Collaborative's Facilitator. Due to unanticipated personnel issues, the Facilitator (based at Dejusticia) has had to be replaced twice in 2018. We are starting 2019 with Karen Hussmann in the Dejusticia Facilitator role. Karen is a TAP expert who brings more than two decades of experience on the substantive issues in TAP but also in managing and coordinating complex international networks. These changes likely contributed to what the Collaborative itself sees as a slow start.

On the positive side, the LC has gained more support to the overarching learning through MIT's GOV/LAB. In mid-2018, Varja Lipovsek, who until then led Twaweza's Strategy and MEL Program, joined MIT GOV/LAB, where her portfolio includes supporting the Collaborative-level learning and linking with the TAP field. To kick-start this work, Varja worked with the Dejusticia Facilitator to conduct the in-depth Learning Assessments for the Hubs, design the second in-person convening and help guide the development of the new inter-hub collaborative projects. Karen at Dejusticia and Varja at GOV/LAB will be co-facilitators of the Collaborative for the remainder of the pilot period.

Another change is that the LC decided to depart from the plan to create an Advisory Group for the Collaborative. We remain committed to engage allies and the wider TAP field with our learnings from this pilot, but given that the LC has a short life-span of just two years and that we needed the first year to gel as a group and design a common agenda, we felt that an advisory group would be too formal for our needs. Instead, we will in 2019 involve the larger vested community of practitioners, academics and funders (drawing on the original TALEARN cohort) in a few ways. One will be through a concerted communication strategy to both share what we are doing and invite engagement. Another will be during our next planned in-person meeting in July; and finally, in our final, larger convening to share our lessons of success and failure, planned for the end of the overall pilot period.

4. **What lessons have you learned during the past year that will help you in your continued efforts to achieve your intended outcomes? Describe any alterations you have made or plan to make in light of these lessons.**

First, while the organizations all share certain key elements which brought them to the LC – e.g. active in the TAP field as non-governmental implementers (or academics in the case of resource organizations), committed to learning within their own structure and supporting others to learn – the fact is that these particular organizations are markedly different in terms of structure of organization, focus areas of work, and organizational goals. Therefore, finding areas of granular and applied common learning has been more challenging than anticipated. Moreover, most of these organizations had not collaborated together previously, had no established track record with each other and therefore needed considerable in-person time to build trust. Trust is a key factor in any alliance or network-building, but it is exponentiated for a group whose premise is to learn together – an endeavor in which there is a need to be open about success and failure, what works and what doesn't. As a result, we have had to build in more in-person time in the first year, which has also resulted in a slower start to collaborative-level initiatives. In 2019 we will also allocate resources for in-person encounters: all members requested to have an in-person gathering in mid-2019. The timing is strategic in that the collaborative initiatives will have had time to really get going on the work, but there is still opportunity to reflect and make adjustments and thus maximizing learning and exchange while the projects are ongoing.

Second, while the LC was designed to be horizontal (i.e., no single leading entity), we realized that active cross-organizational learning does need extra support in the form of facilitation and coordination. The Hubs themselves have expressed the desire for a more concentrated facilitation effort. They are steeped in their programmatic commitments and contexts – which can mean that learning-focused activities, particularly those that require collaborating with new partners, can start on unsure footing, sometimes falter, and take a long time to fully develop. Some of the root issues cannot be addressed through the LC (e.g., the socio-political context which may prompt an organization to change its focus). But in giving the LC the best shot at producing meaningful learning, we will be stepping up the coordination and facilitation functions. This includes more frequent communication within the LC, pro-active follow-up on collaboration between two Hubs, shaping the content, making more explicit links to the TAP field, etc.

Third, by design the Collaborative is very small – but this doesn't mean what we learn should stay within this group. A smart way of scaling up what we learn is through meaningful engagement with other actors –

practitioners, academics and funders – who would like to know more about what we are trying out, learn from it, and contribute to it. As a result, we have the outline of a modest but meaningful outward-facing communication strategy, which will be finalized in early 2019 and put into effect throughout the year. The aim will be to share what we are learning and to invite reflection and engagement from other interested parties who are also vested in the learning space and the TAP field.

Fourth, the members have stated that the structure and operation of the learning collaborative has so far been effective in promoting an open, honest, and horizontal exchange among all partners involved, and this was most visible during the Cambridge meeting. The positioning of the academic members in a co-creative (rather than leading role) in setting the learning agenda is also felt to be meaningful and empowering to practitioners. Going forward we will strive to maintain this horizontality and flexibility, while balancing the abovementioned need to enhance the facilitating structure.

5. **In your proposal, you responded to the question of whether the organization plans to disseminate what it has learned from the work supported by the grant and from the evaluations undertaken in relation to this work. Please provide an update with regard to the status of any such plans.**

The communications plan (currently under review) will include outputs as identified in the concept notes of the different projects; as well as blogs and possibly vlogs housed in the Dejusticia page and disseminated actively by the Collaborative members in different fora, including for funders and other TAP organizations. External contributors to the blog and wider discussion of the issues will be welcomed. We will also look for opportunities to share our progress at events such as the World Bank's GPSA, and other convenings.