

## Section 5

# Working with partners



### **People-driven solutions:**

An introduction to facilitating deep participation for systemic change through Systemic Action Research programming

# Contents

|  |         |
|--|---------|
| <b>1 VIDEO</b>   | Page 80 |
| <b>2 WORKING WITH PARTNERS</b>   | Page 80 |
| <b>3 WORKING WITH PARTNERS:<br/>PRACTICAL LEARNING FROM<br/>CLARISSA</b> | Page 84 |
| <b>4 SKILLS, METHODS AND TOOLS<br/>FOR WORKING WITH PARTNERS</b>         | Page 85 |
| <b>5 TIPS ON PLANNING AND<br/>BUDGETING TO WORK WITH<br/>PARTNERS</b>    | Page 89 |
| <b>6 TEAM REFLECTION</b>   | Page 91 |



*Consortium partners  
at a cross country  
learning event in  
Kathmandu.*

CREDIT: ANIS BASTOLA

**B**eing able to work effectively together as an equitable partnership is a critical aspect of a participatory, learning- and action-oriented, whole systems approach. This learning and reflection brief can help teams learn about how CLARISSA enabled diverse partners in different countries to systematically strengthen how they worked together in-country, and also as part of the wider CLARISSA consortium. These practical lessons are equally relevant for any team seeking to empower its partners and to support a deeply collaborative partnership, regardless of whether teams are already working in a systemic, adaptive way, or not.

Specifically, this brief will help teams:

- Learn about why collaborative and empowering partnerships are an essential element of a systemic, adaptive management approach.
- Learn about the tool – the ‘partnership rubric’ – used by CLARISSA to self-evaluate and enhance how consortium partners worked together on the various levels.
- Learn about working inclusively, a vital skill and approach for empowering partners and making partnerships equitable.
- Reflect on if and how the partnership approach and tools used by CLARISSA has relevance for their team’s programme context.
- Identify any possible actions which their team could take to strengthen how it works with partners.



## 1 VIDEO

Watch the video '[Working with partners](#)' where CLARISSA team members from Bangladesh and Nepal talk about their experiences and learning from working as a partnership. After you have watched the video, note down one to two points which you'd like to highlight and discuss further during the team reflection session.

## 2 WORKING WITH PARTNERS

Working with partners is a typical element of many development and humanitarian programme strategies, and there is an increase in consortium-working across both sectors. For instance, international or larger organisations or agencies often partner with smaller, local or grassroots organisations, which are already known and trusted by target communities and groups. This can enable larger organisations to work with communities and groups on the ground. Grassroots organisations might also decide to partner with larger organisations because it can enable them to access additional resources and capacities. In some cases, organisations might partner with others which have a specific technical expertise and capacity which can support an aspect of a programme. Partnerships can also enable multi-sectoral approaches, which in turn can support broader and more systemic types of programmes. For example, the value of working multi-sectorally is embedded in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), with SDG 17 highlighting the importance of multi-stakeholder partnerships to achieve all the SDGs.

The nature of partnerships between different development actors within a consortium can therefore vary enormously, with different power dynamics at play. While some organisations may be engaging with partners primarily for service delivery, or in a hierarchical way, where lead partners hold the resources and make the decisions; others might be working in a more collaborative, facilitative and power-sharing manner, perhaps by facilitating a network or alliance of partners.

*Bangladeshi, Nepali and international consortium team members at a cross country learning event in Kathmandu from the video '[Working with partners](#)'.*

CREDIT: ANIS BASTOLA

*Terms used in this Brief:*

### **Actionable learning**

Learning which is designed to guide decision-making and actions.

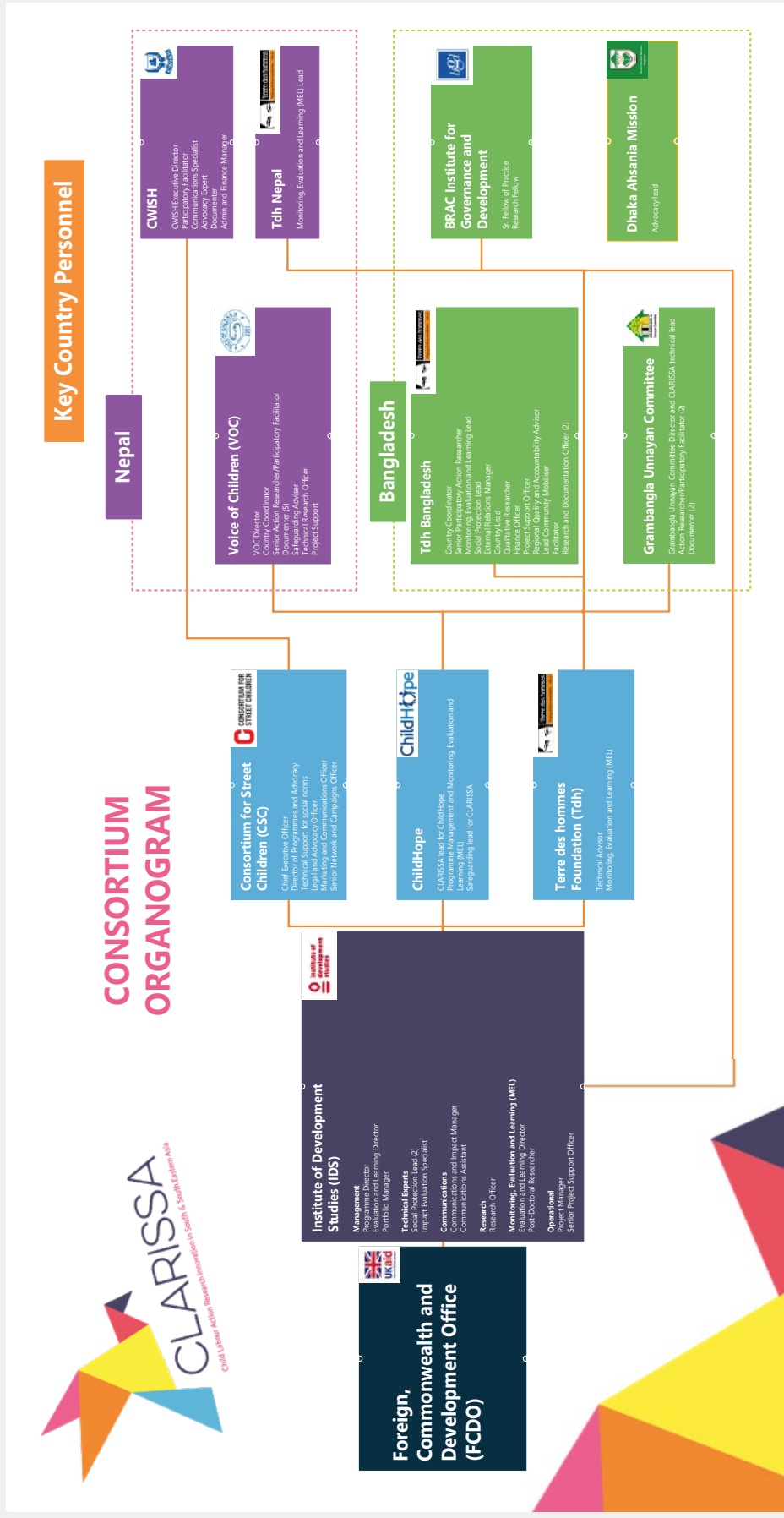
### **Rubric**

An evaluation tool comprising a set of criteria designed to promote consistent learning and/or measurement.

### **Qualitative**

Information that cannot be counted, measured or easily expressed using numbers.

CLARISSA worked with diverse international and national partners in two implementing countries, as a consortium. The diagram below shows the partners and their respective roles, and the extent which the partnership was somewhat complex.



SOURCE: CLARISSA (2020)

In the context of a complex social challenge, such as the worst forms of child labour, it is unlikely any single organisation could comprehensively address the problem alone. The diverse causes, dynamics and interlinkages require rich and equally diverse approaches, perspectives, experience and capacities from a range of actors collectively seeking to address the problem. Additionally, the flexibility of an adaptive approach also requires a partnership arrangement and way of working which can learn and adapt too. Critically, partnerships should be flexible; not hierarchical; actively reflecting on how partnerships are functioning; and making collective decisions and changes in real time throughout the life of the programme. In addition to these considerations, CLARISSA undertook Systemic Action Research on an unusually large scale, working with numerous partners, nearly a thousand children and adult participants in two countries, over several years. To this end, CLARISSA used a specific method and tool to support a strong partnership – the ‘partnership rubric’. CLARISSA also evaluated if and how, and for whom, this tool was effective, and how it could support a strong partnership.

### The CLARISSA partnership rubric

The ‘partnership rubric’ used by CLARISSA partners was a qualitative\* participatory tool used for self-assessment and internal reflection around how the partnership was working. At the heart of this method is the identification of key criteria, which are considered the fundamental elements for the effective performance of the partnership. During a fully inclusive process of participatory workshops with partners, which started at the inception phase, a rubric\* was agreed which identified the following seven key elements of the CLARISSA partnership:

- 1 Communications
- 2 Team identity
- 3 Openness, honesty and mutual trust
- 4 Impact orientation
- 5 Inclusivity and equitability
- 6 Adaptability and flexibility
- 7 Entrepreneurial culture

Each element was designed to be periodically assessed by partner teams during workshops, which in the case of CLARISSA, were incorporated into its After Action Reviews. Teams, usually at the organisational level, ranked the level of performance for each element as either: ‘well-functioning’; ‘emerging’ or; ‘needs help’. These rankings were guided by ‘descriptors’ which aimed to describe what each element may look like at each of the three levels of performance. As with the partnership performance elements, the descriptors were identified in an inclusive and participatory way by partners.



*Consortium partners at a cross country learning event in Kathmandu.*

CREDIT: ANIS BASTOLA

| CLARISSA's original partnership rubric    |   |  |  |
|---|---|--|--|
| Element                                   |  Well-functioning  |  Emerging   |  Needs help   |
| <b>Communications</b>                     | Partners are clear on how the programme is progressing.<br>All partners use Teams seamlessly.<br>Regular communication through multiple mechanisms.   | Communication is haphazard and sometimes causes confusion.<br><br>Without regular face to face meetings, we would not be on the same page about key decisions. | Disagreements due to misinformation leads to conflict.<br><br>Some partners feel left out or unsure of what is happening.<br><br>Country level teams are confused by mixed messages. |
| <b>Team Identity</b>                      | Decisions are reached through consensus.<br><br>Productive and enjoyable working environment.<br><br>Clear definition of roles helps us work as a team.   | There is mutual respect, but this remains formal.<br><br>People work well together but don't necessarily trust each other.                                     | Each partner focuses only on what is in their contract.<br><br>There is no mutual support between partners.<br><br>Partners feel they can make unilateral decisions.                 |
| <b>Openness, Honesty and Mutual Trust</b> | Problems are identified, shared, and discussed openly.<br><br>We have positive personal relationships.<br><br>We handle crises without internal conflict.   | Some partners feel apprehensive about sharing honest opinions with the whole group.  | There is conflict due to problems not being resolved.  |
| <b>Impact Orientation</b>                 | Agreed Theory of Change provides clear vision and priorities.<br><br>The monitoring, evaluation and learning system is co-owned by all partners and delivers quality information on how we are progressing along impact pathways. | There are frequent conversations between partners about the common vision because it remains unclear.  | Activities are not aligned with the programme Theory of Change.<br><br>Partners are not aware of how their work supports the impact strategy of the consortium as a whole.           |
| <b>Inclusive and Equitable</b>            | Good dialogue that enables all to engage.<br><br>Smaller organisations feel they have full voice in decision-making processes.  | Roles require ongoing clarification.   | IDS dominates consortium decision making.<br><br>Smaller partners don't feel valued equally.   |
| <b>Adaptability and Flexibility</b>       | Programme stays on track through making evidence-based decisions to adapt.<br><br>Mistakes are openly discussed.  | There is some adaptation along the way, but it is not well documented.   | We never deviate from original plans.<br><br>Budgets never shift throughout the programme.   |
| <b>Entrepreneurial culture</b>            | We find creative practical solutions to problems.   | We have lots of new ideas but struggle to find ways to implement them.   | We implement the plan without new ideas emerging.<br><br>We fear taking risks.   |

### ③ WORKING WITH PARTNERS: PRACTICAL LEARNING FROM CLARISSA

**Using an agreed approach, and also the partnership rubric, strengthened the partnership.** It was found that by using this method and tool over the course of the programme, the CLARISSA consortium was able to build a sense of co-ownership of the partnership; build a common understanding of what makes a strong partnership; support multiple and disparate partners to work together as a collective; and foster a sense of mutual accountability. Also, the rubric enabled partners to get a sense of how aspects of the partnership were progressing by looking back at past rubric exercises.

**Using the partnership rubric was empowering for partners and helped strengthen inclusivity within the partnership.** CLARISSA found that the partnership rubric method enabled dialogue about power dynamics and inclusivity, as well as around the other elements of the partnership. Partners were considered, and saw themselves as, collaborators in the partnership process. Often, the actions agreed upon to improve aspects of the partnership, such as relationship and trust building were very simple, for instance, by deciding to hold coffee mornings, by being available for informal social interactions, or by deciding to call team members when issues needed to be discussed rather than just emailing.

**The power of the partnership rubric lies not so much in the final evaluation, but rather the process of collective reflection and discussion which the rubric facilitates.** A partnership rubric is not the same as a typical programme evaluation log frame, which uses narrowly defined indicators to measure if a programme objective has been achieved. Rather, the rubric uses ‘descriptors’ of the different elements of the partnership. Descriptors are much broader and open to different interpretations compared to indicators. The organisational team discussions around how to describe the elements and levels of the partnership, as well as the group self-assessments, enabled rich and collective dialogue and reflection. This led to actionable learning\* in real time, with the expectation that certain agreed actions would improve the partnership.

**Partnership rubrics are not a static, one-size-fits-all recipe.** While an initial, collaboratively developed rubric might seem ‘right’ at the time, as a programme progresses and learns, team members may feel the need to adjust the rubric to make it more meaningful in their particular working context. The rubric is flexible in that it can be adapted as programme teams reflect at regular intervals during After Action Reviews. In CLARISSA, this included teams preferring to reflect in their native language (as opposed to the consortium’s use of English as a common language) on what the elements meant or how they could be described at the different levels. As a result, a single programme such as CLARISSA eventually worked using three separate rubrics. While all three rubrics shared the same seven key elements, the descriptors for the elements varied between rubrics and were informed by the context of the international consortium, as well as two separate country contexts. It was found that the ongoing adaptation of the rubrics was particularly helpful for generating an increased sense of ownership for those new to CLARISSA; as well as the refinement and clarification of the collective elements of the partnership in response to what was emerging from programme operations on the ground.

“The CLARISSA partnership is novel to me because it is such a big consortium, but there is no hierarchy in this programme. This is very beautiful.”

CLARISSA partner team member, Bangladesh

“Because criteria are intentionally fuzzy, they are open to different interpretations; and it is exactly this openness to interpretation that triggers discussions and deepens learning.”

CLARISSA Learning Note 3: [Using a ‘Partnership Rubric’ in Participatory Evaluations](#)  
DOI: [10.19088/CLARISSA.2023.001](#)



**There may be times when using the rubric will not be helpful for partner relations.**

If levels of trust between partners are particularly weak, or certain programme tensions have arisen, it might be preferable to take a break from the rubric and use another method to help safely strengthen trust and communications and to facilitate a safe environment to exchange critical perspectives. In the CLARISSA case, working during COVID put a strain on partners forced to work remotely, and the programme opted to use the World Café method on few occasions for this reason. Links to this tool and more details of this process can be found below.

“There is a danger that we create a sense of competition between partners and reinforcing a dichotomous view of big-small and by association, strong-weak. We know that every partner is unique in their scope, capacity and nature of work and this is what makes the partnership function. The rubric will be most effective when we nurture a culture of learning and mutual understanding. Honesty, transparency, commitment and mutual respect are all essential elements, as well as learning to accept criticism.”

**CLARISSA Blog:** [Reflections on if and how our partnership is working in Bangladesh](#)

**CLARISSA RESOURCES**

**CLARISSA Blog:** [Reflections on if and how our partnership is working in Bangladesh](#)

**CLARISSA Learning Note 3:** [Using a 'Partnership Rubric' in Participatory Evaluations](#)  
DOI: [10.19088/CLARISSA.2023.001](#)

## 4 SKILLS, METHODS AND TOOLS FOR WORKING WITH PARTNERS

CLARISSA’s original partnership rubric describes the preliminary collective understanding of how the seven key elements might look at each level. However, when different partners started to unpack the different descriptors, they found that they did not always share the same understandings and interpretations of some of the elements and their descriptors. This led to the collaborative development of the three, separate consortium-level (1) and country-level (2) rubrics during co-creation workshops. Below is an example of how different teams and organisations interpreted the element of ‘entrepreneurial culture’ in the rubric.

### INTERPRETATIONS OF ‘ENTREPRENEURIAL CULTURE’ IN CLARISSA’S PARTNERSHIP RUBRIC

This list of characteristics of ‘entrepreneurial culture’ was identified by different partners from different country contexts, and shows the diverse interpretations. The discussion included a focus on what ‘taking risks’ can mean in the context of the partnership, and CLARISSA more generally.

**What ‘entrepreneurial culture’ can mean to different people:**

- 1 Working together to address emerging issues through joint team effort – COVID context with moderate risk taking
- 2 Combined effort for social benefit
- 3 Creative practice for generating evidence and taking follow up actions
- 4 Combined efforts of groups to achieve common goal
- 5 A joint effort where resources contribution from different bodies are shared or contribute to produce goal
- 6 Culture that dares to act jointly to bring positive change through innovative and collective efforts
- 7 Being adaptive
- 8 Openness to receive feedback – constructive criticism
- 9 Converting challenges into opportunities to promote innovation
- 10 Motivate to take risk

**Using the rubric.** Organisational teams went through the rubric exercise at six-monthly intervals during the After Action Review workshops. Teams found that completing the rubric in advance was useful in many ways as it allowed more time for discussion during the workshops, and it also provided a safe space for partners to self-assess prior to meeting with the wider partnership. Partners did, however, use the rubric in slightly different ways, for instance, by giving themselves one collective organisational ranking; or by asking individual team members to undertake the rubric exercise and then compiling these into a collective organisational ranking; or even by providing input under each possible ranking, i.e. for each element: what was well-functioning, what was emerging and what needed help. The programme found that while doing the rubric in advance freed up more time for nuanced discussion during meetings, the different ways partners used the rubric also created some lopsided input during the meetings.

“I have learned a lot. I am a ‘small’ researcher from Bangladesh. From that place I have never felt small. Not only me, but everybody could share their ideas.”  
 CLARISSA partner team member, Bangladesh

Below is an example of how ‘Openness, honesty and mutual trust’ was originally collectively described by CLARISSA consortium partners during the inception phase, and also an example of how partners at the consortium level assessed the consortium during a workshop.

**An example of assessing ‘Openness, honesty and mutual trust’ in the partnership rubric**

| Element                            | Well-functioning | Emerging | Needs help |
|------------------------------------|------------------|----------|------------|
| Openness, honesty and mutual trust |                  |          |            |

**Example of how the consortium collectively described this element during one review:** Overall, we are emerging, though certain things are going well and other are less than emerging. High levels of openness and trust in long-established relationships; Some of the team members might be too new to the programme so have not had the time to establish a level of trust that produces openness and honesty (e.g. the Country Coordinators who only met everyone a few weeks ago); There is not an expectation that they will have high levels of trust already, people are too new to have this trust; Trust and openness can be hard within local cultural dynamics where there are existing hierarchies.

.....  
 Consortium partners at a cross country learning event, Kathmandu.  
 CREDIT: ANIS BASTOLA



## DECIDING NOT TO USE THE RUBRIC AND THE ROLE OF OTHER ACTIVITIES

At one point during CLARISSA's implementation, following the time of COVID when partners could only work together remotely, it was decided that it was better to adapt the use of the partnership rubric during one After Action Review, because there were partnership tensions emerging, underscored by a lack of trust. The shift to the World Café method for this workshop, conducted in person, helped navigate these tensions and allowed for more critical reflection. The World Café method offered a safe and welcoming environment for individuals to connect in smaller mixed groups. All the groups could give their input on all the elements through several rounds of small group conversations. CLARISSA learned that in both countries, more open conversation in relation to the rubric and stronger partner relationships were achieved through a combination of shifting to in-person discussions, spending time working together to improve trust, the use of informal spaces to connect with each other, using the World Café method, and explicit partnership-building activities. For more information, watch a [short video](#) on how to run a World Café workshop. More detailed guidance can be found at the [World Café website](#).

“At the same time, people potentially showed less courage in mentioning negative points about their organisation if the exercise is done in a group consisting of people working in different positions within the organisation. Not all group processes are equally safe for everyone sitting around the table. Power dynamics can create blockages to generating open dialogue.”

CLARISSA Blog: [Reflections on if and how our partnership is working in Bangladesh](#)

Partners in Nepal reflect together on what has been learned in an end of programme workshop.

CREDIT: ANIS BASTOLA

**Working inclusively.** The approach and skills required to work in a deeply participatory, learning- and action-oriented way with programme participants are also highly relevant and critical when seeking to work in an open, power-sharing and collaborative manner with partners. For this reason, this learning and reflection brief focuses on being inclusive.

A core element of CLARISSA generally, and a feature of the partnership rubric method, is an inclusive approach. Broad participation of all the partners and their respective team members helped strengthen meaningful participation and ownership of the partnership. This meant that the different partners and team members were heard, diverse perspectives could be expressed, and that they could influence decisions about how to go forward as partners.

Being inclusive requires a strong, trusting relationship between partners, which can support creative problem-solving, as well as help ensure a sense of ownership in relation to a partnership. Conversely, if a process is not inclusive, for instance if it works with a very small group; if partners do not trust each other; or if it does not acknowledge power dynamics or hierarchies, it is unlikely that there will be a strong sense of collective ownership of the partnership.



There are a number of other reasons why a process might not be inclusive. For instance, in CLARISSA, national teams were not comfortable discussing specific ideas or terms in the rubric which were unclear to them in English, preferring to use their own home language. More generally, there may also be cultural factors which limit some team members from speaking openly, for instance in some cultures women may not speak out in front of male colleagues, or younger employees may let their older supervisor take the lead. These typical challenges were actively addressed during After Action Reviews, and corresponding actionable learning points were identified. CLARISSA was also very conscious that the lead organisations could be seen as the more powerful partners, as they held the resources and potentially could make important decisions. This issue of power is discussed further in this brief under *Tips on Planning and budgeting to work with partners* below.

### TIPS FOR BEING MORE INCLUSIVE

**Inclusivity is usually based on power relations.** Observing who holds more or less power in a context can help identify who might be included or excluded from a process. In development programming this might include considerations around children; women; stigmatised, discriminated against or minority groups, especially vulnerable groups; and people with disabilities. Be aware that power relations also exist between partners and within partner organisations. Learn more about **power** on the [participatorymethods.org](https://participatorymethods.org) website. Consider trying the activity '**The power in the room**' from the **Barefoot Guides** series which helps organisations analyse their internal power relationships.

**Being inclusive** requires that each partner be aware of what they bring to a partnership, how the other partners may see them, and being prepared to find strategies to make power-sharing more equitable.

**Being inclusive** is about identifying who (people, partners) is being left out and developing diverse strategies to access and better include them. Consider taking time to facilitate a discussion on the significance of inclusiveness with partners or groups.

**There are many diverse reasons why** individuals or partners might be, or feel, excluded. This could form part of the discussion on inclusivity, where the group collectively learns about which factors influence inclusivity in their contexts, and then develops inclusive facilitation strategies accordingly.

**Other inclusive strategies include** being very attentive to the dynamics of partner dialogues: who is speaking/contributing more, and who is speaking/contributing less? Being aware that people and partners may adapt what they say depending on who else is in the group. For instance, if the international organisation or head of an organisation is present, other participants or partners may not say what they are really thinking.

**Facilitating an inclusive process is not always straightforward**, but with reflection and practice, Individuals and teams can become skilled, inclusive practitioners.

## GUIDANCE AND TOOLKITS FOR WORKING MORE INCLUSIVELY

Further guidance and some practice exercises on how to **enable inclusive dialogue** from Child Resilience Alliance's *Supporting community-led child protection: an online guide and toolkit*.

Watch this **short video** about how power imbalances in a community process can lead to exclusion. The same can apply to a partnership.

This video shows how **facilitators enabled inclusive dialogue** as part of a Participatory Action Research programme in Kenya.

Barefoot Guide 5: **Mission Inclusion** has many diverse reflections, suggestions and activities around inclusivity.

**Sustainable Development Goals (SDGS)** The SDG website.

### CLARISSA resources about being inclusive

CLARISSA **Blog**: *Building rapport for Action Research with the community in Bangladesh*.

CLARISSA **Research and Evidence Paper 6**: *Business Owners' Perspectives on Running Khaja Ghars, Massage Parlours, Dance Bars, Hostess Bars, and Dohoris in Kathmandu, Nepal*. DOI: [10.19088/CLARISSA.2024.001](https://doi.org/10.19088/CLARISSA.2024.001)

Participation, Inclusion and Social Change **cluster** at the Institute of Development Studies (IDS).

### Other skills and tools in this series:

1. **Working in a child- and people-centred way**

Key skill: *Communications skills*

2. **Mapping systems and taking action**

Key skill: *Asking good questions*

3. **Using evidence and learning to adapt programmes in real time**

Key skill: *Being a reflexive team*

4. **After Action Reviews**

Key skill: *Being a reflective practitioner (individual)*

5. **Working with partners**

Key skill: *Being inclusive and aware of power dynamics*

6. **Safeguarding for Systemic Action Research**

Key skill: *Building trust and rapport*

## 5 TIPS ON PLANNING AND BUDGETING TO WORK WITH PARTNERS

- Using a partnership rubric doesn't necessarily have to increase the budget or timeframe of a programme. For instance, the activity could be integrated into existing or planned meetings and other reviews at no additional cost.
- It is also possible to introduce the rubric within an existing programme. It is likely that any funder will welcome this aspect within a programme, as it is a systematic way of assessing how a partnership is functioning, and making informed changes as the programme goes along.

- One question which is less straightforward is the extent to which one should involve the funder(s) in these assessments. By definition, the funder will be perceived as holding a lot of power. Partners may not feel comfortable sharing some of the more challenging aspects of the partnership with the funder. Also, while we often use the language of partnership in relation to funders, careful consideration would need to be given to extent to which a funder is willing to see itself as a true partner in the process, and that it is open to critical reflection and making changes by using the rubric. In the case of CLARISSA, it maintained open and honest lines of communication with its funder and there was a high level of trust between the funder and the lead partner (IDS).

**CLARISSA practical do’s and don’ts for working with partners for inclusive, deep collaboration**

| DO   | DON'T  |
|--|--|
| Do use the partnership rubric periodically and regularly. CLARISSA undertook the process every six months.   | Don't use the partnership rubric so often that partners get 'rubric fatigue'.  |
| Do be sensitive to when it might not be appropriate to undertake a rubric evaluation session. For instance, if the rubric exercise could exacerbate partner tensions.  | Don't force partners to work on the rubric together when there are underlying issues, such as weak relationships and trust which could be better addressed in other ways.  |
| Do focus on and prioritise the reflection and discussion process around how to describe the elements, and which ranking to give each element. The rubric is designed to provoke deep reflection and discussion from different perspectives, and from which everyone can learn. | Don't rush the reflection and discussion process by prioritising arriving at decisions or 'answers' regarding the descriptions or level of performance for each element. The process of arriving at the 'answer' is equally important. |
| Do develop a partnership rubric in a collaborative, inclusive and participatory way in order to include diverse perspectives and to help build a sense of ownership of the partnership.  | Don't impose a predefined rubric on partners. It may not seem meaningful, clear or relevant to some partners, it may feel top down, and it may erode a shared sense of collective ownership.   |
| Do enable teams to contextualise and adapt the rubric where needed in an ongoing way.  | Failure to adapt a rubric will mean that it will seem less contextually relevant to many team members, who may see less value in using it.   |
| Do be aware of the power dynamics between different partners and that this might limit critical reflection. Build trust and develop reflection strategies that allow for openness.   | Don't assume all partners feel comfortable contributing to critical reflection, or that they will say what they are really thinking.   |
| Do plan to bring partners together physically where possible, and not just virtually. CLARISSA evidence highlighted how in-person meetings yielded the richest discussions.  | Don't assume that virtual discussions or other remote settings will enable deep reflection or discussion. While these can be run skilfully, relationship building and trust is always a key consideration within these processes.      |
| Do consider how to integrate the partnership rubric into other relevant workshops and meetings.  | Don't assume that systematically managing the partnership needs to cost money or take more time.   |
| Do work in a bottom-up way to support a strong partnership. Use the same programme facilitation approach, skills and mindset to work with partners.  | Don't work in a top-down manner with partners, where the lead organisation makes all the decisions.  |
| Do accept that in large and complex programmes it might not be possible for everyone to know everything. Create a shared drive, CLARISSA used Microsoft Teams, so that team members can access additional information as needed.   | Don't bombard team members with too much information or 'over-communicate'. This can have the opposite effect, with people ignoring updates and other communications because they cannot deal with the volume of information shared.   |

## 6 TEAM REFLECTION

This section of the brief is designed to be used in a team reflection session. Allow around two hours to complete this section. Use your notebooks to record your answers and main points. You'll need to refer back to these later.

**Skills building (undertake throughout the reflection session, with 20–30 mins discussion at the end of the session)** This brief focuses on the skill of being inclusive and acknowledging the power dynamics between different people, groups and organisations. Aim to observe and take notes throughout your discussion regarding how inclusive you think the conversation is. Is there anything in particular you noticed?

**Team discussion about working in partnership (45 mins)** It is suggested the team watch the video again together. Then discuss the following as a team:

- 1 Are we part of a partnership? How would we describe the partnership? For instance, is it a hierarchy, or power-sharing? Is it simple or more complex?
- 2 How do we currently manage our partnership?
- 3 In what ways do any of the points in this the video or brief seem relevant or helpful for our own context?
- 4 Is there space to integrate a partnership rubric method into how we work? How would it be helpful?
- 5 Is there anything you still want highlight or discuss with the group?

**Actions brainstorm (45 mins)** What kinds of actions could the team take to move towards strengthening how it works with partners? Note down your ideas, you will come back these ideas later and decide if they are still relevant.

**Critical reflection and feedback on being inclusive (20–30 mins)** Spend some time at the end of the session to discussing with the other team members how inclusive you felt the session was. Aim to provide and receive critical reflection and feedback in an open and honest way. The feedback is not designed to judge an individual or team, it is designed to spark ideas on how the team might work more inclusively next time. Note how this feedback session felt – is there anything in particular you noticed that you want to share?







**T** +44 (0) 1273 606261

**E** clarissa@ids.ac.uk

**W** clarissa.global

**X** @ChildLabourActn

**F** #ChildLabourAction

**T** +44 (0) 1273 606261

**E** ids@ids.ac.uk

**W** www.ids.ac.uk

**X** @IDS\_UK

**F** facebook.com/idsuk

This is an extract from the learning and reflection resource for practitioners: Lucy Hillier (2024). *People-driven solutions: An introduction to facilitating deep participation for systemic change through Systemic Action Research programming*. Brighton: Institute of Development Studies. DOI: [10.19088/CLARISSA.2024.040](https://doi.org/10.19088/CLARISSA.2024.040) The full resource can be accessed via the DOI link provided and on [participatorymethods.org](https://participatorymethods.org) and [Child Hub](https://www.childhub.org).

### Credits

Author: Lucy Hillier

Designer: Lance Bellers

Published by the Institute for Development Studies,  
University of Sussex

### Acknowledgements

This resource was made possible as a result of the time, commitment and insights of the children and young people, business owners and community members who participated in CLARISSA in Bangladesh and Nepal. The resource could not have been produced without the critical inputs of CLARISSA core consortium partners and reference group members: Consortium for Street Children, Institute of Development Studies, and Terre des hommes Foundation. Reference group members were: Marina Apgar (IDS), Pia MacRae (CSC), Pedro Prieto Martín (IDS), Anna Raw (IDS), Samantha Reddin (IDS), Harry Rutner (CSC), Roy Tjan (Tdh), Helen Veitch (CSC). Additional technical reviewers were Jiniya Afroze (Tdh), Danny Burns (IDS), Raju Ghimire (VOC), Sukanta Paul (Tdh), and Mieke Snijder (IDS).

Special appreciation also goes to the facilitators, documenters, researchers and writers from Children-Women in Social Service and Human Rights (CWISH) (Nepal); Grambangla Unnayan Committee (Bangladesh); Terre des hommes Bangladesh; and Voice of Children (VOC) (Nepal), who delivered the CLARISSA programme, and without whom this resource would not exist.

### Suggested citation

Lucy Hillier (2024). *People-driven solutions: An introduction to facilitating deep participation for systemic change through Systemic Action Research programming*.

Brighton: Institute of Development Studies.

DOI: [10.19088/CLARISSA.2024.040](https://doi.org/10.19088/CLARISSA.2024.040)

### Copyright

© Institute of Development Studies 2024

DOI: [10.19088/CLARISSA.2024.046](https://doi.org/10.19088/CLARISSA.2024.046)



This resource has been funded with UK aid from the UK government (Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, formerly the Department for International Development). The opinions expressed are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views or policies of IDS or the UK government.



This is an Open Access paper distributed under the terms of the [Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International licence \(CC BY\)](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/), which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original authors and source are credited and any modifications or adaptations are indicated.