

## Six tips for delivering effective country programmes

### Key findings

1. Country programmes should be led and managed in-country, preferably by nationals of that country.
2. A Theory of Change and Impact Pathway can be an effective way of communicating a country programme's goals and focus to a wider group of stakeholders.
3. The Theory of Change and Impact Pathway should be co-developed with key stakeholders, and remain flexible to changing demands.
4. Budgets need to be aligned with the goals and time frames of the country programme in order to enhance impact.
5. Local suppliers should always be used where possible. If local technical expertise is not available, a combination of local and international expertise can be an effective solution.
6. Monitoring, evaluation and learning for the country programme should be part of ongoing strategic planning, not just a once-a-year exercise.

In 2010, CDKN was established as a demand-led initiative, bringing the best resources available from across the global market to support decision-makers in developing countries to develop the necessary policies and plans to tackle climate change. Having responded to requests for technical assistance from governments in 70 different countries in the first two years, in 2012-2013 CDKN decided to take a more strategic approach by focusing resources on 12 priority countries: Bangladesh, Colombia, El Salvador, Ethiopia, Kenya, India, Indonesia, Nepal, Pakistan, Peru, Rwanda and Uganda; and on one subregion: the Caribbean.

CDKN's model for country engagement consists of two key elements.

- A dedicated country team – usually headed by a country engagement leader who provides strategic guidance and can secure access to key stakeholders, and supported by a country programme manager who coordinates day-to-day delivery of the programme.
- The country programme system – the framework used to guide strategic planning, delivery, monitoring and reporting. This consists of a country-level Theory of Change and Impact Pathway, a baseline study, annual impact monitoring, and a plan for the year ahead.

A number of other elements contribute to the success of CDKN's country programmes. These include the UK- and regionally based hub teams, who provide support and oversight to the country teams on everything from procurement to knowledge management; and the suppliers themselves, who deliver the bulk of CDKN's technical assistance work on the ground in the priority countries, and are managed by the country teams.



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This CDKN Essentials outlines some of the key lessons we have learned, and is aimed at funders and technical assistance practitioners. It is not intended to be prescriptive or viewed as the only way of achieving results; the six tips illustrate some of the ways in which CDKN has been successful, and are intended as recommendations for others considering taking a country programme-led approach to delivering development assistance.

- **The country programme should be led and managed in-country, preferably by nationals of that country.** CDKN's country teams have been most effective when they are led by a country engagement leader who is a strategic thinker, is innovative, networks well with senior decision-makers, and has a deep understanding of policies and processes in-country. An effective country engagement leader will have a high level of credibility, strong technical expertise (in this case, in climate compatible development), and be able to facilitate consultative processes to secure stakeholder buy-in to the programme and its projects. Where possible, the leader should be supported by an in-country project manager, who is a highly organised individual with good technical understanding and relationship management skills. An added bonus for a country team would be the presence of an in-country knowledge management and communications resource person who can disseminate the findings of CDKN's work, and link into global learning and knowledge-sharing processes.
- **A Theory of Change and Impact Pathway can be an effective way of communicating the country programme's goals and focus to a wider group of stakeholders.** The formalisation of CDKN's country programmes involved developing a Theory of Change and Impact Pathway to articulate our understanding of how change happens within a country; what CDKN is aiming to achieve; and the assumptions that sit behind a successful outcome. Having this context and our goals set out clearly has helped us to communicate what CDKN's country programmes are all about. Over time, as a Theory of Change is reviewed and updated, it can become lengthy and potentially cumbersome. We found that a short, sharp visualisation of the Theory of Change is useful to complement and summarise the detail, allowing for more effective communication of the country programme's purpose and focus.
- **The Theory of Change and Impact Pathway should be co-developed with key stakeholders, and remain flexible to changing demands.** When the Theory of Change is linked to demand, it has greater potential for impact and positive outcomes. Key stakeholders should be engaged in co-creating the Theory of Change to ensure buy-in to a shared vision for

the country programme. Keeping its Theory of Change flexible over time can help a country programme to remain responsive to changing stakeholder needs, and to design projects that can meet those needs and deliver long-term impact.

- **Align budgets with the goals and time frames of the country programme to enhance impact.** To deliver the longer-term impact envisaged for the country programme, projects need to be planned and budgeted over longer time frames. Annual budget cycles tend to lead to shorter projects with more limited potential for impact. Taking a longer-term approach can also help increase stakeholder buy-in and increase the likelihood of being seen as a committed partner. Funding only short-term projects can increase the risk of inadvertently pursuing projects with short-term political benefits rather than longer-term strategic impacts.
- **Local suppliers should always be used where possible.** Whether an international or local supplier is best placed to deliver a project will depend on the context, but local suppliers should always be preferred. Where the technical expertise is not there, a delivery team comprising a combination of international and local suppliers can be an effective solution due to the mix of local and cultural knowledge with international expertise. Where only international suppliers are used, the CDKN country teams are vital to provide local context and understanding. Strong ownership and active leadership by the country engagement leaders supports more successful project delivery and stronger working relationships. In many cases, CDKN supported the creation of project advisory or steering committees that formalised the engagement process between key stakeholders and suppliers, and led to greater buy-in and uptake of results.
- **Monitoring, evaluation and learning for the country programme should be part of ongoing strategic planning, not just a once-a-year exercise.** Monitoring and evaluation can be a useful tool to inform strategic planning, particularly if what is done at project level is aligned with the country programme level. This requires a strong link between the goals and objectives of the projects and the programme as a whole, and for monitoring and evaluation and the associated learning not to be just a data-collection exercise once a year, but to be integrated into project planning and delivery. Country programmes also require a dedicated knowledge management and learning resource person who is an integrated part of the country team, driving the team's participation in global knowledge-sharing and learning efforts. Without this, taking local learning to the global level – and vice versa – can be a real challenge, imposing an additional time burden on the country programme manager and country engagement leader.

#### Authors:

Susannah Fitzherbert-Brockholes and Connie Norton.

**Further reading:** Case studies from CDKN's priority countries and subregion may be found at [http://cdkn.org/cdkn\\_series/inside-story/](http://cdkn.org/cdkn_series/inside-story/)