Supporting field-based learning for transparency and accountability initiatives: Lessons from the Learning Collaborative
Primary authors:
Varja Lipovsek, MIT Governance Lab
Karen Hussmann, Dejusticia

Contributing authors from the Learning Collaborative:
Walter Flores, Centro de Estudios para la Equidad y Gobernanza de Sistemas de Salud
Jonathan Fox, Accountability Research Center
Alison Miranda, Transparency and Accountability Initiative
Michael Moses, Global Integrity
Baruani Mshale, Twaweza

Suggested Citation:

Acknowledgments: We would like to thank Selmah Goldberg of MIT GOV/LAB for her invaluable assistance in drafting and editing this document.

January 2020
# Table of contents

## Executive Summary

### Report Overview

1. Introduction
2. Design Process and Key Features of the Learning Collaborative
3. The Collaborative Governance and Support Structures
4. Results and Lessons Learned
5. Reflections and Recommendations

## Annex I: Final Hub Reports

- CEGSS
- Dejusticia
- Global Integrity
- Twaweza

## Annex II: Learning Collaborative Theory of Change
Executive Summary

The Learning Collaborative was designed as an experimental model for supporting learning practices of civil society organizations working on transparency, accountability and participation in the global South, and to contribute to knowledge about their effectiveness. Recognizing that learning is essential to effective implementation of transparency and accountability initiatives, the Learning Collaborative tested a novel collaborative model with the following features: leadership by southern-based practitioner organizations and support from academic resource organizations; a focus on peer-based and networked learning initiatives; a horizontal governance structure powered by a facilitator function; and dedicated resources for practitioner organizations.

The membership of the Learning Collaborative consisted of four practitioner organizations (Centro de Estudios para la Equidad y Gobernanza en los Sistemas de Salud [CEGSS]; Center for Law, Justice and Society [Dejusticia]; Global Integrity; and Twaweza East Africa) that were supported by three resource organizations (the Accountability Research Center at American University [ARC]; Massachusetts Institute of Technology Governance Lab [MIT GOV/LAB]; and the Transparency and Accountability Initiative [TAI]) that promote practitioner-based generation of evidence and learning. The Learning Collaborative was launched in 2018 with support from the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation and the Ford Foundation and concluded in 2019 at the end of its two-year pilot phase.

In autumn 2019, the members conducted a reflection and assessment process. We experienced several challenges in implementing the Learning Collaborative, and ultimately this effort resulted in a series of concrete lessons about how (and how not) to support practice-based learning to enhance complex governance interventions. This report explains how and why the Learning Collaborative was initiated and designed; assesses its governance and practical functioning; outlines key results and lessons learned from the experiment; and offers recommendations for future collaborative learning models.
In summary, we assess that the Learning Collaborative achieved significant results at the hub (practitioner organization) level, partial results at the cluster (pre-existing networks) level, and very limited results at the collaborative level. On the other hand, our joint reflection generated relevant insights about the design features of the Learning Collaborative, useful to future generations of learning mechanisms.

Key takeaways from the Learning Collaborative are:

- As a result of the Learning Collaborative inputs, practitioner organizations substantively improved their own learning practices. In particular, they involved a broader range of staff roles in organizational learning and strategic planning, and redesigned their monitoring, evaluation and learning structures. These changes contributed to improved programming and strategy development among these organizations.

- Practitioner organizations introduced new learning approaches within their pre-existing partner networks (clusters). Different types of learning strategies were applied depending on best fit, including joint experimentation, horizontal peer-to-peer exchanges, dissemination of lessons, and capacity building. In many cases, these first-time learning spaces and methods improved the networks’ strategy through tools and procedures for reflection.

- At the collaborative level, we implemented innovative mechanisms to support joint learning, such as exchange visits and peer-based organizational learning assessments. Yet we struggled to make progress at this level – for example, joint learning proposals were developed between members but not implemented. The main reason for this was likely the Collaborative’s emphasis on learning without a substantive focus. In retrospect, this core characteristic made it overly ambitious to both design learning processes and create new knowledge within and across the hubs. Other contributing factors to these failures include uncertainty about continuation of funding, a lack of clarity of the role of the resource organizations, and failure to align new activities with organizational annual work plans.

In our view, the most significant contributions of the Collaborative are insights about the successes and failures of its key design features and how these functioned in practice, as noted in the table below.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Feature</th>
<th>One-line description</th>
<th>Recommendation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Led by Southern-based practitioners</td>
<td>Important normative signal of power balance</td>
<td>Keep the leadership in the global South, but clarify criteria for leadership selection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small and diverse membership</td>
<td>Common agenda is more important than the size of membership</td>
<td>Be more explicit in defining a clear shared agenda</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning binds organizational interests</td>
<td>Agree on a common definition of and approach to learning</td>
<td>Build a specific shared understanding of learning from the start</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Practitioners supported by resource organizations</td>
<td>Powerful relationship for feedback between practice-based learning and academic inquiry</td>
<td>Clearly outline the roles and responsibilities of resource organizations, try different ways to “bridge” the two groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Substantive and equal resource allocation</td>
<td>Level of funding signaled recognition of the value of learning</td>
<td>Use an adaptable mechanism that allows for equitable and need-based allocation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Horizontal and lean governance</td>
<td>Lean governance needs to be balanced with clear governance structures and processes</td>
<td>Assign Steering Committee a clear mandate and determine facilitation role by consensus</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Although the Collaborative struggled with some of the higher-level goals, it has underscored that practitioner organizations are more effective if they approach implementation through a learning angle. We also know from experience that joint learning can be more rewarding through shared experimentation and reflection. But it is not easy.

As we experienced in the Learning Collaborative, it is a challenge to focus on our own organizational practices, support learning in our networks, and enact joint learning plans to contribute to wider knowledge on effective governance initiatives. Our experiment offers important lessons about how to support collaborative learning going forward.
Report Overview

This report was written by the Steering Committee members of the Learning Collaborative through a collective effort including an in-person reflection meeting and follow-up calls. In addition, we interviewed a number of people who were involved in shaping the Collaborative effort for their feedback and reflection.1

The primary purpose of the report is to openly share the successes and failures of the two-year Collaborative learning experiment. With this, we hope to generate thoughtful discussions about what may be effective models to support learning practices for practitioner organizations who are at the frontline of conducting transparency and accountability work in developing country contexts. We describe and analyze how the Collaborative was set up, how it functioned, what it achieved and where it failed. Reports from individual practitioner organizations are in the Annex.

The report is organized as follows.

Section One introduces the Collaborative and its aims, and briefly describes the context within which the Collaborative was initiated.

Section Two describes core design features of the Collaborative and some of the critical factors at the inception phase.

Section Three looks at how this design played out in the structure and functioning of the Collaborative.

Section Four looks at results, focusing on implementation across the three envisioned levels of impact: individual organizations, their existing networks (or “clusters”), and Collaborative-wide work.

Section Five offers lessons learned for future support to learning in the field of transparency, accountability and participation.

1 We thank the following colleagues for their candid and helpful feedback in the reflection phase of the Collaborative: Megan Colnar (Open Society Foundation); Cesar Rodriguez-Garavito (JustLabs; formerly Dejusticia); Alan Hudson (Global Integrity); Michael Jarvis (Transparency and Accountability Initiative); Alfonsina Penalooza (Hewlett Foundation); Rakesh Rajani (Co-Impact; formerly Ford Foundation); Lily Tsai (MIT Governance Lab).
1. Introduction

We co-created the Learning Collaborative to test the idea that a peer-based, networked model with dedicated resources enhances field-based learning, improves practice, and contributes to knowledge about transparency, accountability and participation initiatives.

Civil society organizations, donors, and other actors in the transparency and accountability field recognize that traditional development approaches based on blueprints or “best models” are ill-suited to addressing complex transparency and accountability problems. In response, many actors now adopt a learning-based approach, characterized by problem analysis, iterative design and implementation, and reflection.

But even as learning has become something of a requirement - most frequently tacked onto monitoring and evaluation programs - practitioner organizations almost never have time to stop and think deliberately. Seldom is learning among practitioners valued equally as implementation and funded at sufficient levels to make it effective. As a result, we know little about the features and practices of effective learning organizations in the global South; how learning practices contribute to more effective programming; and how collaborations between practitioners, with the support of researchers, can enhance learning.

The overall aim of the Collaborative was to improve the effectiveness of civil society organizations (CSOs), in particular in the global South, to pursue transparency, accountability and participation goals, including an empowered and active citizenry and more responsive and accountable governments. The Collaborative had three overarching goals:

- Clarify how attention to organizational learning practices can improve transparency, accountability, and participation practice, building particularly on the expertise of civil society organizations working in the global South;

---

2 We, the contributors to the report, have chosen to adopt the first-person voice throughout this document. We note however that the group drafting the initial design of Collaborative was broader and that its membership shifted over time, so that some of the individuals who helped to shape the early stages did not continue through the implementation.
- Deliver learning exchanges targeted to practitioner needs

- Inform and influence the broader transparency, accountability, and participation field and philanthropic actors on effective learning approaches.

We designed the Collaborative as a two-year pilot, recognizing that it takes time to test underlying assumptions and achieve the envisioned results. The initial grant with financial support from the William and Flora Hewlett and Ford Foundations supported a two-year pilot phase; conditional on the pilot, the possibility of extension was discussed. The goals of the pilot were pursued through flexible and networked learning activities at three levels:

- Hubs (activities within each practitioner organization)

- Clusters (activities with existing partners or networks of each hub)

- Collaborative (joint initiatives between the hubs)

Meet the Learning Collaborative

The practitioner members of the Learning Collaborative are four hubs:

**Centro de Estudios para la Equidad y Gobernanza en los Sistemas de Salud (CEGSS).** Based in Guatemala, CEGSS combines social science research with capacity building among populations that are socially excluded in order to promote social change and political action.

**Center for Law, Justice and Society (Dejusticia).** Based in Colombia, Dejusticia is a research and advocacy organization dedicated to the strengthening of the rule of law and the promotion of social justice and human rights in Colombia and the Global South.

**Global Integrity.** Based in the United States of America, Global Integrity supports locally-led efforts to design and implement innovative, learning-centered, and adaptive approaches to addressing complex governance-related development challenges.

**Twaweza East Africa.** Based in Tanzania, Twaweza works on enabling children to learn, citizens to exercise agency and governments to be more open and responsive in Tanzania, Kenya and Uganda.

These were supported by three resource organizations that promote practitioner-based evidence and learning in the transparency and accountability field: the [Accountability Research Center at American University (ARC)](https://accountabilityresearch.org). [MIT Governance Lab (MIT GOV/LAB)](https://govlab.org) and the [Transparency and Accountability Initiative (TAI)](https://www.transparencyinitiative.org).

**Lessons from the Learning Collaborative**
2. Design Process and Key Features of the Learning Collaborative

Background to the Collaborative

In response to the increasing need to incorporate learning into practice, several networks to support practitioner learning have sprung up in the past decade. Some are driven primarily by practitioners addressing problems in a common sector (e.g. Community of Practitioners on Accountability and Social Action in Health), or implementing a common accountability approach (e.g. Public Service Accountability Monitor). Other networks are engineered by donors to support learning among their grantees. This was the case of TALearn convened by the Transparency and Accountability Initiative, a collaborative of donors in the transparency and accountability field.

TALearn was a shared learning space between practitioners, donors, and interested academics. The mix of the three groups was intended to give a wider platform to what were otherwise primarily bilateral collaborations, and to enhance communication, learning and the possibility of joint work among the different actors. In retrospect, TALearn was a useful communication and networking forum, but it did not engender collective learning. TAI’s strategic realignment in 2016 was a great opportunity to re-think how the group of donors could best support learning among practitioners. A group of about forty TALearn participants - a mix of practitioners, donors, and academics - convened in early 2017 to brainstorm on possible next iterations of a field-driven learning initiative. The idea for the Learning Collaborative emerged as one of these experiments.
Design of the Collaborative

The initial group which set out to define the parameters of the Collaborative in early 2017 had nine members who volunteered to co-write the Collaborative proposal. Of these, three dropped out during the early phases of the drafting process. At a mid-point of the process, Ford Foundation proposed the addition of Dejusticia as a new member. The final membership of the Collaborative was four practitioner organizations, two academic partners, and TAI as an interested and supportive party. These seven organizations put the final touches on the design, implemented the grant, and are the co-authors of this report. In the final design stage, we built on lessons learned from TALearn and on our own experiences of collaborative efforts. We also had to balance our own timing and priorities with that of the donors.

This is not unique to the Collaborative effort, but it’s worth noting in this case that the (real or perceived) pressures to align with donor schedules influenced some of the design choices. In addition to the timeline, it became clear through the drafting process that the donors also held fairly strong ideas about the form, composition and emphasis of the end product. Given the importance of securing funding for the Collaborative, donor preferences were given significant weight by the proposal drafters.

Last but not least, the design of the Collaborative was affected by fatigue. There were two in-person meetings during 2017, but the long-distance drafting process spanned nearly the whole year. The organizations differed significantly from one another, a factor which complicated finding common ground for the proposal, and probably contributed to three of the members dropping out. In retrospect, a “writing sprint” would have been worthwhile, with key drafters coming together for a few intensive days of writing.

Below we describe the seven key design features that were agreed upon, noting where there were differing opinions.

Key Design Features

**Grounded in and led by Southern-based practitioners.** We sought to tip the balance in favor of practitioner priorities and Southern actors. The aim was to send a normative signal as well as to prioritize practitioner questions and types of learning (in contrast to Northern-based, often academic-driven learning agendas). As part of this feature, we debated whether Global Integrity, based in the United States, fits best as a resource organization or as a practitioner member. In the end, because of their model of partnering directly with civil society organizations in the global South, they became a practitioner member.
Membership as a small, selected group.
The size of the Collaborative was intended to be limited, building on experience that large gatherings are not conducive to coalescing around learning design and practice. We debated on membership, with some disagreement on the optimal size and composition of members. Inviting more members would broaden the Collaborative and strengthen the experience and skills within it, but it would also mean that each organization would get a smaller portion of available funding, and could lead to more unwieldy decision-making and less experimentation. We decided against expanding membership for the two-year pilot phase.

Practitioners and academics as co-members.
We were unanimous that collaboration between practitioners and academics can enhance both practice and theory. However, we placed academics in a supportive rather than leading role, in order to prioritize the design of learning questions and methods to meet practitioner needs, and inform theory based on practice. In keeping with this rationale, none of the resource organizations received funding for their research support. To further enhance the bridge between academia and practice, MIT GOV/LAB brought on board a practitioner-in-residence.

Learning as the glue which binds organizational interests. Outside a focus on transparency, accountability and participation, we purposely avoided selecting a particular sector, problem, or initiative as the common denominator between members. Instead, commitment to learning - and supporting others to do so - was deemed as the most critical common factor. We left the definition of learning quite wide to promote experimentation and allow for a range of practices and organizational models. The variety was intended to strengthen the possibilities of learning exchanges between Collaborative members.

Differing opinions: In the initial stages some members proposed a model with much tighter inclusion and exclusion criteria. Members advocated that the Collaborative needed to choose one or two narrowly defined parameters which would unite the members in a common purpose: for example, a particular social accountability method, or a specific sectoral problem, or a learning approach.

Horizontal and minimal governance structure. We sought to avoid hierarchical and elaborate governance models. Instead, we proposed to form a Steering Committee for strategic guidance, to define the concrete learning agenda and questions, and to provide oversight. A core role in the Collaborative was that of the facilitator, based within Dejusticia. As the primary grant recipient organization
Dejusticia received additional financial support for this role. The practitioner-in-residence hired by MIT GOV/LAB with additional financial support complemented the role of the Collaborative facilitator and focused on further connecting members on learning, including bridging academic and practitioner interests. We believed the Collaborative did not require explicit accountability mechanisms, as it would function primarily through the self-interest of members who would align their work plans and agendas on mutually beneficial initiatives, and these would be supported by the facilitator functions.

**Equal and predetermined resource allocation.** Rather than have members compete for resources, we decided to provide an equal and substantial amount of funding to each of the hubs, meant explicitly to support their internal learning functions and processes, their networks (clusters), and initiatives across the full Collaborative. The rationale for this model was feedback from TALearn and the Collaborative members themselves that donor funding is most often allocated to programmatic implementation, leaving very little for learning and reflection - particularly models of learning that are outside “traditional” program monitoring and evaluation, such as peer-to-peer support and mentoring.

**Differing opinions:** Not all TAI donors were ready to support the final shape of the Collaborative, and one of the more prominent disagreements had to do with the funding mechanism. The concern was that the pre-allocating funding to a handful of organizations (rather than, for example, calling for proposals of collaborative projects and then funding those) would not lead to substantive collaboration between the members.

**Effectiveness at multiple levels.** We envisioned achieving effects at three levels, with initial signs expected within the two-year timeframe. First, the hubs would improve their own learning practices, which would, eventually, lead to more effective implementation of their programmatic work. Second, the hubs would enhance the learning practices in their pre-existing networks (clusters). This level was seen as an important diffusion mechanism: The Collaborative may have few core members, but these organizations were well-networked, and would support and enhance learning practices within their networks. Third, the Collaborative would make contributions to the wider field of transparency and accountability knowledge by linking the issues it worked on with knowledge gaps in the field. This level was meant to connect the work of the Collaborative with a range of international audiences interested in effective transparency and accountability practices.
3. The Collaborative Governance and Support Structures

This section discusses the primary architecture we created for the Collaborative to aid its functioning: the governance model, the facilitation model, and the planning, monitoring, evaluation and learning frameworks and processes.

Governance and Facilitation

Any collective undertaking requires a set of ground-rules for joint decision-making on strategic direction and oversight. The main governing body was the Steering Committee, composed of representatives from the hubs and resource organizations, with the responsibility to guide the strategy and decision-making at the collective level. The Steering Committee was supported by the facilitator function. Most of the core collaborative functions - such as identifying opportunities for peer exchange - were to be put into action by the facilitator. Despite the fact that general ground rules were outlined in the project proposal, in practice we experienced several challenges with the governance structure, the facilitation role and decision-making processes.

The principle of respect for organizational autonomy led to passive management and collective action breakdown. The Collaborative had a horizontal structure where no one organization dictated the joint agenda, which was to be set through deliberation and agreement in the Steering Committee. Concurrently, no single member had the mandate to hold others to account; instead, the Steering Committee would review progress and self-correct, as needed. The respect for autonomy of each Collaborative member is a worthy principle, but we did not
translate it into practical guidance for collective decision making, nor did we proactively demand more directive governance.

**Steering Committee composition.** The Steering Committee was composed of people with a range of levels of authority within their organizations: some were executive directors, others higher-level staff members in charge of learning. Each variant had practical challenges for decision-making and follow up. For example, when an executive director participates in the Steering Committee, information on decisions taken must flow back to the broader organization staff, senior and junior levels, in order to take corresponding action. When a member of the Steering Committee is not the executive director, s/he must ensure his/ her organization’s senior management supports and implements the plans of the Collaborative.

**Proactive facilitation.** As an innovative and ambitious learning experiment among diverse and geographically distant organizations, the Collaborative proposal foresaw that facilitation would play a critical role. Described as “connective tissue,” the original role focused on generating linkages across members; it was the responsibility of the members to generate content. The tasks of the facilitator were to strengthen communication across hubs, coordinate and contribute to grant monitoring and reporting, and manage communications, product development, and dissemination. We experienced several challenges with this function and attempted to correct them along the way.

- The model was not implemented well in the first year. For example, monthly phone calls with all Collaborative members did not occur; visits to hub visits were conducted only in the second half of the first year for the purpose of the learning assessments; and a co-created work plan for joint activities was delayed. Critically, the person who held the facilitator role changed twice due to unforeseen personal reasons.

- The practitioner-in-residence at MIT GOV/LAB worked closely with the facilitator to strengthen support for organizational learning for the hubs, and to build links between the hubs’ work and knowledge gaps in the transparency and accountability field.

- Facilitation overall was stepped up in the second year. Since we as the Steering Committee had not taken a proactive management approach, we needed much more proactive facilitation to identify learning needs and opportunities, promote and broker relevant exchanges, help craft collaborative activities, facilitate collective learning sense-making, and lead on the identification of results and lessons learned.

Although we made substantive efforts to strengthen this important function, we assess that as facilitation faltered in the first year, the
hubs adapted their focus to efforts at the hub and cluster level - spheres within their immediate control and interest.

**Tools for Planning, Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning**

Given the multiple layers of work and expected effects of the Collaborative, we developed guidance and reflection mechanisms to help coordinate collaborative-level activities. We comment on these below.

*The guidance and framing tools developed were too abstract, high-level, and static.*

The overarching guidance tools were the theory of change, the monitoring and evaluation framework, and a joint work plan. These documents were never actively used, however. The joint work plan, which meant to signal possibilities for cross-hub collaboration, was a static document where each member signaled their own planned activities. Developed at a high level of abstraction to include visions of immediate, mid-term and long-term change, the theory of change and the monitoring and evaluation framework were useful birds-eye views of what the Collaborative hoped to achieve in the long term, but were too abstract as a tool to guide and reflect on the ongoing work. See Annex II for the Collaborative theory of change.

*A theory of action and a focus on shorter-term results would have been helpful.* As the Steering Committee, we could have adapted the high-level and abstract documents to be more useful. Theory of action could have been added on top of the theory of change - that is, not only hypothesizing how change might happen, but outlining specific ways in which the members were going to make that change happen. A theory of action would have also prompted a refinement of the monitoring and evaluation framework to capture change indicators in more specific ways. Moreover, the expected outcomes needed a more realistic time horizon, with particular focus on developing more detailed short- and medium-term changes that would be feasible within the two-year period allocated to the Collaborative pilot.

*An innovative contribution: organizational learning assessments.* The overall aim of these assessments was to help organizations sharpen their learning practices in the context of the substantive work they conduct. In doing so, these exercises also identified learning practices and gaps in which members could support each other through peer exchanges, as well as thematic questions related to transparency, accountability and participation around which the members could usefully collaborate. The organizational learning assessments were widely experienced as meaningful and helpful. For more detail, see the box below.
Organizational Learning Assessments

What were organizational learning assessments?

The assessments were in-person visits to the hubs conducted jointly by the facilitator based at Dejusticia and the practitioner-in-residence from MIT GOV/LAB. They had several complementary objectives:

- Help hubs reflect on their learning structures, mechanisms and culture related to the strategic direction and programmatic work of the organization.
- Provide a baseline of learning for each hub, against which the organization could select priority areas to focus on for improvement.
- Identify learning needs and gaps in which other members could provide peer support and assistance, thereby setting the stage for meaningful peer-to-peer exchanges.
- Identify thematic questions and areas of interest for further research and learning, thereby setting the stage for potential collaboration between members on content-based learning initiatives.

What were the unique features of the assessments?

- **Peer-led**: Given the horizontal structure of the Collaborative, the assessments were carried out by peers with organizational learning expertise.
- **Not linked to a grant or evaluation**: Focused on the needs of the hubs, these assessments were not linked to performance review by a donor or for a specific grant. This mitigated the power dynamic between assessors and the hub’s staff, and gave them freedom to engage without worrying about how the results might be interpreted by an external party, particularly one with funding power.
- **Deep dive**: To understand not only the learning structures but also the learning culture of a hub, interviews and meetings were conducted with all or nearly all teams in the hub, including financial and other support teams.
- **Content as well as process**: The assessments included a review of the strategy (and theories of change) and learning processes. They grounded analysis of the learning mechanisms around the core question of “learning about what and for what purpose?”
- **Candid feedback**: Initial feedback was delivered to the hub followed by a detailed written report as well as online conversations, depending on the interest and needs of the hub. It was the hub’s decision whether to share the outcomes of the assessment more publicly.
How effective were the assessments?

• The learning assessments were considered by all members to be very valuable in providing a “critical friend” to review hubs’ learning mechanisms and processes. The assessments were thorough and participatory (deep and detailed enough to encompass most of the organization’s learning work, and involved a wide range of staff). They provided an independent review which synthesized achievements and gaps, and suggested priority areas for improvement. Importantly, the findings and recommendations built entirely on intrinsic motivation by the organization to improve - rather than any external demand or pressure. The Collaborative members attest to the usefulness of these exercises:

  We were already deep into a strategic review in our organization when the assessment took place. It compelled us to take a step back and review some of the decisions we had made about how to support learning. We continue to believe that learning cuts across all of our work, but as a result of the assessment, we decided to also create a new monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL) position which could be dedicated to supporting learning work across the teams. (Global Integrity)

  The assessment also included our grassroots volunteers, and that was very significant, because we heard clearly that the monitoring system which we had set up was not meaningful to these grassroots workers. They saw it as an obligation to send certain information to us in the main office, but didn’t see how that data was useful in their own work. We realized that we had to develop the data requirements together with the volunteers, but also to train them further in ability to use the information directly for their own grassroots work. (CEGSS)

  Our organization had been developing a learning portfolio for some time, but it was a slow process that didn’t have a clear focus or mandate. The learning assessment was very useful in that it synthesized a lot of thinking about learning and a variety of small and disparate practices related to learning that had been going on within various teams and units. Building on what the teams were already doing, it helped to clarify for the leadership of the organization what direction we wanted to develop the learning work in a way that would be most useful to us at this point in time. (Dejusticia)

• In addition to supporting individual organizations, the learning assessments also identified specific opportunities for peer support between organizations - that is, matching the strengths in one organization with the needs in another. These peer support exchange opportunities were actively promoted by the facilitator, although in the end very few were acted upon (e.g. peer support for strategic litigation provided by Dejusticia to CEGSS).

• Given that the learning assessments covered substantive issues as well as learning processes, they were an excellent basis for developing proposals for collaborative projects. Although these proposals were not implemented (see Section 4), the learning assessments surfaced a number of opportunities for potential collaboration.
4. Results and Lessons Learned

This section presents a synthesis of the main results that were achieved at the hub, cluster, and collaborative levels. For more detailed information on each hub and their respective cluster, please refer to reports from individual hubs in the Annex.

What was expected of the Collaborative within the two-year timeframe? First, the individual members were to improve their own learning practices, which would eventually lead to more effective implementation of their programmatic work. Second, the members would enhance the learning practices of organizations in their pre-existing networks (clusters). Third, the Collaborative would make contributions to the wider field of knowledge in transparency and accountability.

In summary, we assess that the Collaborative achieved significant results at the hub level, partial results at the cluster level, and very limited results at the collaborative level. We examine these below.
Hubs - Results and Lessons

All hubs reported that participating in the Collaborative signaled the organization’s commitment to learning that was felt across teams. We summarize the main ways in which the hubs adapted and improved their learning plans and processes and include specific examples from each hub.

**Hubs involved more diverse staff in organizational learning and strategic planning.** The timing of the Collaborative intersected with ongoing processes of strategy review within all four hubs. Drawing on Collaborative resources and expertise, hubs expanded participation to more staff members across various levels (not just senior staff) in the organizational strategy development process. As Dejusticia noted, “The design, facilitation and organization of the end-of-the-year reflection and learning sessions with all thematic and administrative teams strengthened the internal learning culture and generated crucial inputs for the strategic planning exercise,” (Dejusticia Final Report). Others took the approach of widening participation in their strategic planning by involving input from external collaborators and other “critical friends,” bringing new voices and perspectives into the process.

**Hubs redesigned monitoring, evaluation and learning structures.** Global Integrity hired a new Research and Learning Manager, initially funded with resources provided by the Collaborative, and redesigned their approach to monitoring and evaluation: “The intentional, systematic approach we took to developing and using our monitoring and evaluation system - which was made possible only because of Collaborative resources - has improved the quality of our work with partners, and strengthened the cohesion of our internal team.” (Global Integrity Final Report)

CEGSS switched from having one designated administrative position exclusively focused on monitoring and evaluation, to assigning these responsibilities to a wider and diverse range of staff. “We converted all monitoring and evaluation forms into an electronic system to be filled online from wherever our staff is located. And we have distributed the facilitation of learning sessions among our team members in a rotating manner, so that the whole CEGSS team is now involved in the learning process.” (CEGSS)

Monitoring, evaluation and learning became better integrated, with Dejusticia hub noting “The development of information systems as institutional memory and source of reference for institutional learning (intranet, an information repository, and an activity registration tool which will evolve into a result monitoring tool over time) helped to strengthen the coherence
between planning, monitoring and internal communication.” (Dejusticia Final Report)

Clusters - Results and Lessons

The “cluster level” referred to activities that each hub would engage in within their pre-existing partner organizations or networks. We note first that the cluster-level work was conceived in the proposal of the Collaborative as primarily a diffusion mechanism for learning practices pioneered by the hubs. As such, it was under-emphasized in the first year of the Collaborative. In the second year, it became clearer that clusters were a natural space for experimentation with collaborative learning - that is, not only sharing lessons, but applying the new learning models and approaches in these active networks. The hubs were also motivated to work in these pre-existing clusters with longer collaborative and thematic ties. As a result, the Steering Committee allocated some non-committed funding to additional activities at the cluster level in year two. We summarize below the main ways in which the hubs utilized Collaborative funding, support and expertise to influence their clusters.

Members introduced new learning practices into their pre-existing networks. Practitioners often form networks in a quest to increase their advocacy effectiveness or as a reaction to contextual changes (e.g. laws passed that restrict civil society functioning), but usually do not have space or resources to reflect and learn from their approaches, strategies, and operating modalities. A learning approach can help with strategy, tools and procedures for reflection.

Global Integrity worked with over ten organizations in their network while participating in the Collaborative noting “The organizations with whom we worked have all benefited from our collaboration, having learned how to improve their own learning practices, and in many cases, how to leverage adaptive learning processes in order to make more effective progress towards achieving the outcomes they care about.” (Global Integrity Final Report).

Dejusticia mapped their many existing networks and prioritized three of them to 1) support a strategic planning process in one network; 2) support the integration of a reflection and learning perspective into an internal evaluation of a second one; and 3) participate in a strategic review of a third network to prompt development of a more proactive strategy (Dejusticia Final Report).

Hubs developed different types of cluster-level learning modalities. Hubs realized that there are bidirectional mutual learning processes in clusters which need to be recognized and built upon. Different strategies are appropriate,
depending on the type of partners and what kind of need is identified. The strategies used by the hubs include:

- **Joint experimentation.** In one instance, a hub tried diffusing monitoring and evaluation responsibilities throughout the organization’s staff instead of centralizing them in one role.

- **Horizontal peer-to-peer exchanges.** For example, one hub launched a platform for alumni of their courses to promote exchange and connection with each other and with the hub.

- **Wide dissemination of lessons.** Lessons were communicated through peer-reviewed academic publications, face to face workshops and audiovisual products. Through these different means, lessons reached different audiences: academics, practitioners and grassroots organizations.

- **Capacity building with partners to help them to learn more effectively.** For example, Global Integrity provided mini-grants to four partner organizations to fund joint activities promoting learning and collaboration (Global Integrity Final Report).

Given that the focus on clusters came late in the Collaborative, it is fair to say that the possibilities of supporting learning at this level were under-explored. We recommend that future network-based learning endeavors are more explicit from the outset about what cluster-level work is meant to be and provide clear and regular guidance to this effect. This could include the following:

- Look for and invest in organic pre-existing structures at hub-levels (partners, networks, coalitions), ideally with an interest and/or need to engage in learning and reflection activities in order to make the collective work more effective.

- Conduct learning assessments at the cluster level similar to those at the hub level in order to identify needs and to inform how to improve learning and what for.

- Provide or develop a menu of options for cluster-level learning approaches and strategies in line with what makes most sense in their respective contexts.

- Create space and methodologies that allow members to compare and learn from how different clusters are managed.

Collaborative - Results and Lessons

In part to justify the investment in a few organizations, we envisioned that the
Collaborative would contribute to practice and evidence in the realm of transparency and accountability for the wider governance field—that is, make the whole greater than the sum of the parts. Two goals at this level were (a) to contribute to knowledge about how learning organizations learn, and (b) to influence the global governance research agenda with field- and practice-based new knowledge. We designed a series of activities and plans to achieve these goals. However, at this level we struggled to make progress, and much of the envisioned work faltered during the two-year grant period.

**Goal 1: Contribute to knowledge of how learning organizations learn.**

*Multiple mechanisms to facilitate learning were discussed but few carried out.* The members envisioned contributing lessons that would be relevant to hubs (and their funders) on how to use learning-based methods to be a more effective organization. In part, this was meant as identifying successful learning practices within each member, but also “road-testing” these with other members (or within networks), therefore generating lessons on how specific learning approaches translate from one organization and context to another. A number of mechanisms were planned for this, but in practice very few of them happened. For example, bilateral visits (in the form of study visits, structured capacity building or peer-to-peer tutoring) between the hubs had been anticipated but very few were carried out.

When the bilateral exchange visits did take place, they were attested to be meaningful. An example of this was the exchange between Dejusticia and CEGSS and its partners on strategic litigation in order to strengthen Guatemalan human rights defenders in judicial strategy design, communication and social mobilization. This exchange was highly valued and also laid the ground for future collaboration between these organizations.

**Organizational learning assessments supported learning within organizations,** identified specific opportunities for peer support between organizations, and laid the foundation for substantive learning proposals between hubs. For details, see Box on Organizational Learning Assessments.

**Goal 2: Influence the global governance research agenda with field- and practice-based new knowledge.**

One strategy we pursued towards this goal was to design practitioner-driven research that could be jointly undertaken by members. Through this effort, we developed six joint learning proposals at the end of the first year, each crafted by two or three Collaborative members. These proposals...
were based on common interests surfaced in the organizational learning assessments, and therefore built on members’ own priorities. None, however, were implemented during the experiment. We explore some of the main reasons below.

**Uncertainty about continuation of funding discouraged new initiatives.** After the faltering start and loss of momentum in the first year, the joint learning proposals seemed to be too much of a lift in the second year. The funders did signal early in year two that the experiment would not be funded beyond the initial two years; partly as a result, Collaborative members were subsequently risk-averse to undertake new collaborative initiatives that were likely to take more than one year to generate any lessons, even though these built on their own pre-existing work plans and priorities.

**Role of the resource organizations was not clearly defined.** Two of the resource organizations were academic research groups, and could have been well positioned to help carry out the proposed collaborative projects. However, within the Collaborative they were deliberately assigned a reactive role - that is, called upon by the practitioners when relevant and needed. The funding for potential collaborations with academic groups was at the practitioners’ discretion as well (academic support groups were not allocated funding under the Collaborative). Given the short timeframe and funding uncertainties, practitioners chose not to prioritize these collaborative projects in which the strengths of the research organizations could have played a more active role.

**New learning activities have to be absorbed into organizational annual work plans.** Member organizations’ own internal structures do not always allow for quick introductions of new activities into their annual work plans, even those focused on learning. Combined with the squeezed timing, this significantly truncated what some of the organizations could take on during the second and last year.
5. Reflections and Recommendations

The Learning Collaborative resulted in fewer results than anticipated. But what can we learn about its functioning and design that is useful for future learning endeavors? In this section, we revisit the key design choices made, reflect briefly on how each one worked out in practice, and offer suggestions for what we would do differently, if we were designing a new Learning Collaborative today. The tone of this section is critical, but done so in the spirit of highlighting the most relevant lessons for the next iteration of learning collaborations.

Grounded in and led by Southern-based practitioners

How well did it work in the Collaborative?

Partly. Dejusticia, as the manager of the main grant, was rightly recognized as a leader in their field (human rights and strategic litigation), however, other factors played a strong part in hindering the establishment of clear leadership. For one, the governance structure did not allow for strong leadership within the Collaborative (more on this below); second, Dejusticia underwent significant personnel changes during this time.

In the next Collaborative, we would:

- Keep this design feature to continue tilting the power balance towards field-based practitioners.

- Lay out clear characteristics of what kind of organization should be the lead in addition to being Southern-based - e.g. being a leader in organizational learning.

- Recommend a different management and governance structure (more below).
Membership as a small and diverse group

How well did it work in the Collaborative?
Partly. While the Collaborative was intended to be small, the group that emerged was shaped less by design choices than by self-selection into (and perseverance through) the proposal drafting process. It may well be that a large group can absorb more variety of members and interests, while a small group needs a more tightly-defined focus. The Collaborative was in some ways a mismatch of a small group with too much variety. With such a diverse group, it would have been even more important to build a common identity or culture around the Collaborative.

In the next Collaborative, we would:

- Conduct background research by analyzing and comparing various models of existing networks for more informed design decisions.

- Be less concerned about size, but more about defining more explicitly the common interests and common agenda between the members. This can include setting out more strict membership criteria as part of a basic membership charter. In our experience, it is especially important to have a clear purpose, parameters, and expectations for all members.

- Invest up-front in building trust, relationships, and shared values of the group. Excellently facilitated in-person meetings are essential to build relationships, but given the time and cost they require, exploring and adopting other tools that support long-distance collaboration is critical. On the other hand, building trust and relationships does not supersede the essential need for a clear governance structure and, perhaps even more importantly, the need for a clear shared agenda (both further addressed below).

Learning as the common denominator which binds organizational interests

How well did it work in the Collaborative?
Not well. The design of the Collaborative purposively did not mandate a particular learning question or orientation, only a commitment to learning; it was assumed that the members would find common ground based on the fact that they were active in the transparency, accountability, and participation field and interested in learning. The emphasis on learning but without a substantive focus made it overly ambitious to both design learning processes and create new knowledge within and across the hubs. The lack of a shared understanding of what was meant by “learning” (about what, and how) was a problem for crafting collaborative learning agendas. Combined with the diversity of members and
their interests, the group struggled to bond on a platform of learning.

**In the next collaborative, we would:**

- Not abandon the idea that learning can be the basis for a collaborative endeavor - but to be a useful design feature for a collaborative, it needs to be specified along one or more dimensions, e.g. learning more specifically about what, or learning in which contexts, or learning through which methods.

- Generate a shared understanding of learning at the start of the project to establish a common ground among the members, focusing on the purpose of learning. Exactly *how* learning is defined is not as important as the fact that the group defines it in a way that builds common ground for practice among the members.

- At the outset draw more specific parameters around learning approaches, methods, or outputs (though not necessarily all three), and develop commensurate and realistic guiding Theory of Action or other guiding frameworks. This would provide a common basis for crafting collaborative learning questions and activities.

- Further develop and hone the organizational learning assessments at multiple levels: for hubs, for bilateral inter-hub exchanges, and for crafting joint learning proposals.

**Practitioners and academics as co-members, with academics in supporting role**

**How well did it work in the Collaborative?**

*Partly.* Having academics in the supporting rather than leading role meant that the learning agendas were set by the practitioners according to their needs, but could still benefit from academic inputs. However, the resource organizations did not have a clear mandate, and having them simply “on call” did not make the most of their resources. On the other hand, the organizational learning assessments are an example of how efforts to improve links between academia and practice can be successful: they provided structured and targeted support to the individual Hubs, but also identified learning questions grounded in the hubs’ own work, connected them in joint learning proposals and identified gaps in knowledge to which these would usefully contribute.

**In the next Collaborative, we would:**

- Keep the combination of academics and practitioners to maximize on the intersection of access to broad evidence patterns together with the grounded understanding of problems. However, continue to try out different “bridging” functions between academic and practice-oriented priorities and capacities.
Outline the role and responsibilities of the academic organizations much more clearly to make the most of their unique value added - e.g. drawing on existing evidence to interrogate and support the practitioners’ learning agenda. Particularly the roles which entailed linking across the members’ various learning interests, and connecting those to the transparency and accountability field would have been supported better by a clearer mandate for the academic organizations.

If the group is bigger, access to networks of researchers (rather than a few select ones) may be preferred. We recommend exploring initiatives that assist in match-making between academics and practitioners according to interest and need.

Substantive, equal and predetermined resource allocation

How well did it work in the Collaborative?
Partly. The initial equal distribution of resources among the hubs reflected the horizontal structure of the Collaborative, and the predetermined amounts were meant to signal trust in each member to use the funds according to their needs and interests. However, the hubs had varying pre-existing levels of funding, size, scope, type and geography of action, and partner networks. So while equal in amount, it may not have been egalitarian. On the other hand, it’s unclear what effect this siloed funding arrangement had on stimulating collaboration between members.

In the next Collaborative, we would:
- Keep significant and dedicated funds for learning.
- Design a more adaptable funding distribution mechanism, for example, one through which the Steering Committee could allocate additional funds (beyond initial “seed” funding) based on proposals submitted by members. This would keep with the peer-driven ethos of the Collaborative, but would introduce a way to make the funding more egalitarian, as well as merit-driven, based on the nature of the proposals.

Horizontal and lean governance structure

How well did it work in the Collaborative?
Not well. It was not the horizontality or the leanness of the structure that didn’t work; it was the lack of a clear charter upon which the Steering Committee could act. This became particularly problematic as issues with facilitation emerged, which was the core coordinating role within the Collaborative. The lack of clarity around the Steering Committee’s role likely contributed to collective action inertia inremedying coordination problems that arose.
In the next Collaborative, we would:

- Clarify the governance structures and processes as well as the facilitation model, and ensure that both are explicitly endorsed by all actors involved. This should include the following:

- Creation of a Steering Committee with a well-communicated mandate for strategic direction and regular oversight, clear rules on who should be part of the Committee, a mutual accountability process, as well as ground rules for decision-making and monitoring of implementation.

- A consensus building process to select the desired facilitation model. The model should clearly spell out the functions, responsibilities and profile of the facilitator role, ensure collective selection and performance evaluation of the facilitator, and establish basic processes and structures to confront unforeseen events (in particular, changes in facilitator personnel or membership in the Steering Committee).

### Summary table of key design features

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Feature</th>
<th>One-line Description</th>
<th>How well did it work?</th>
<th>Recommendation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Led by Southern-based practitioners</td>
<td>Important normative signal of power balance</td>
<td>Partly</td>
<td>Keep the leadership in the global South, but clarify criteria for leadership selection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small and diverse membership</td>
<td>Common agenda is more important than the size of membership</td>
<td>Partly</td>
<td>Be more explicit in defining a clear shared agenda</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning binds organizational interests</td>
<td>Agree on a common definition of and approach to learning</td>
<td>Not well</td>
<td>Build a specific shared understanding of learning from the start</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Practitioners supported by resource organizations</td>
<td>Powerful relationship for feedback between practice-based learning and academic inquiry</td>
<td>Partly</td>
<td>Clearly outline the roles and responsibilities of resource organizations, try different ways to “bridge” the two groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Substantive, and equal resource allocation</td>
<td>Level of funding signaled recognition of the value of learning</td>
<td>Partly</td>
<td>Use an adaptable mechanism that allows for equitable and need-based allocation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Horizontal and lean governance</td>
<td>Lean governance needs to be balanced with clear governance structures and processes</td>
<td>Not well</td>
<td>Assign Steering Committee a clear mandate and determine facilitation role by consensus</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Although the Collaborative struggled with some of the higher-level goals, it has underscored that practitioner organizations are more effective if they approach implementation through a learning angle. We also know from experience that joint learning can be more rewarding through shared experimentation and reflection. But it is not easy.

As we experienced in the Learning Collaborative, it is a challenge to focus on our own organizational practices, support learning in our networks, and enact joint learning plans to contribute to wider knowledge on effective governance initiatives. Our experiment offers important lessons about how to support collaborative learning going forward.
accountability of public policies and services in health. This network is called “Community Defenders for the Right to Health” (REDC-SALUD in Spanish) and its indigenous leaders are either elected by their communities or recruited by more experienced Defenders to be trained in the basics of law and legal framework, community based monitoring of public services and strategic advocacy. The network initiated 8 years ago in 5 municipalities and with 20 active members. Currently, it is present in 35 municipalities and with over 150 members (about 40% women). The innovation of this example of community organization is combining grassroots activists from different fields (environment, indigenous culture, gender, sustainable agriculture) that understand health as a human right and that better access to health services are essential to advance their own agenda and struggle (environment, gender, culture, agriculture). Defenders also have strong knowledge of law and the legal framework allowing them to engage with health and other government authorities in a different capacity and resource power than other community health activists. The Community Defenders have been successful in improving local health services,
including resource allocation. However, local services continue to be affected by structural bottlenecks occurring at central level. Because of this, Community Defenders are currently engaging with national level authorities, Parliamentarians and the National Ombudsman office to resolve structural issues. During a learning and expansion process of 8 years, CEGSS has implemented a participatory process to train, advice and technically backup the Network of Community Defenders.

After over a decade of progressive laws for citizen participation and the creation of public institutions to support democracy and the rule of law, Guatemala has started recently backtracking in most of the advances of the past years. Social conflict is scaling up due to extractive industries, widespread corruption is reducing resources for public services and many community leaders - particularly indigenous - are criminalized by private and state actors. This changing context has been directly affecting CEGSS and the Network of Community Defenders. In the year 2018, several Defenders were facing criminalization and CEGSS devoted time and efforts to support them. This situation affected the activities of CEGSS during the first year of the Learning Collaborative (LC). We were able to do some adapting and managed to reschedule some activities planned for year 1 and improved implementation during year 2.

2. Snapshot of activities conducted in the framework of the LC3

2.1. Main hub-level activities

Developing a new theory of change and strategy for CEGSS and REDC-SALUD. After 6 years of accountability work at municipal and provincial level, CEGSS and REDC-SALUD have identified that most of public health services failures are caused by structural issues related to the lack of regulation, lack of supervision and vested interests around centrally procured supplies. There was a need to tackle these structural factors. In the annual assembly of CEGSS and REDC-SALUD held in December 2017, it was agreed that a new strategy should be developed to engage with these structural issues that affect public health services at local and provincial level. During the year 2018 and 2019, CEGSS used resources from the LC to support a team that developed draft versions of the strategy and to support regional and national level workshops to discuss and adjust the new strategy. These workshops were attended by delegates from REDC-SALUD and CEGSS. The new strategy is in the final stages of validation and it will be ready for dissemination in the first quarter of 2020. It is the result of an expanded process of reflection and teamwork in contrast to the previous strategy, which was developed in
2015 had limited opportunity for reflection and was mostly developed by senior staff.

**Developing and implementing electronic forms for monitoring and evaluation.** During the LC review of 2018, one of the themes that emerged was CEGSS’ interest to move from monitoring and administrative reports done in isolated word and excel files, to an automated system fed into an online platform and with real time updates. With the support of the LC grant, CEGSS staff and some external consultants developed electronic forms to report field activities, expenditures and develop monthly plans. In addition, we acquired tablets for all field staff. Presently, all staff uses the electronic forms directly from a tablet. This information is updated as soon as each activity is completed, so we have information in real time about field activities. Field staff are very satisfied with the new automated system because is easier and faster than the previous excel and word files. Staff at central level is also satisfied because they can continuously monitor how the field activities are ongoing.

**Systematizing and digitalizing methods and tools developed by CEGSS.** During our more than 10 years of life, CEGSS has developed and field tested different methods and tools. Up to last year, we did not have a full compilation of all the tools and methods in a common format that could easily be shared with other interested organizations. During the year 2019, CEGSS team reviewed systematized and digitalized all methods and tools. The product of this process is a catalogue with a unique identification number and a description of each method and tool.

### 2.2. Main cluster-level activities

**Mexico-Central America workshop on Legal Empowerment.** Together with the organization NAMATI, CEGSS designed and facilitated a regional workshop for 17 civil society organizations from within Mexico and Central America. One of the central themes of the workshop was strategies for engaging marginalized communities in legal empowerment processes. The methods, tools and experience of CEGSS were part of the main contents of the workshop. Through this event, CEGSS expanded its contacts with organizations within the region. One outcome of the workshop was an action plan to advance the collaboration among organizations. Within that plan, CEGSS will provide technical assistance on community-based evidence, using podcasts for human rights education and innovative strategies to train grassroots organizations for accountability of public services.
**Organizational strengthening for ASOREVI.**
This is a Guatemalan grassroots organization working on transparency and accountability for public services benefiting cancer patients. The organization is made up entirely of volunteers who survived cancer. For the past two years, CEGSS has supported ASOREVI with training, basic equipment and resources to develop a monitoring and evaluation system, communication strategies (website, campaigns) and advocacy.

**Organizing one of the 5 themes at the COPASAH Global Symposium, Delhi October 2019.** CEGSS was selected as leader to organize one of the 5 themes at the global symposium. The theme was around indigenous and other marginalized populations and accountability and attracted over 100 participants from among practitioners, academics and policymakers from more than 30 different countries of Africa, America, Asia and Europe.

**Dissemination at international events.**
During the two years of the LC, CEGSS was invited to present its experience and learning at several international events, such as, a global meeting of social movements and legal empowerment held in Marrakesh, Morocco in February 2019. Sixty five participants from 40 countries attended. The second event was the VI World Justice Forum in the Hague, Netherlands, April 2019. Walter Flores represented CEGSS in the inaugural plenary to discuss gaps in access to justice for marginalized populations and promising approaches. The forum had over 500 participants from 70 countries around the globe.

### 2.3. Main inter-hub activities

DEJUSTICIA and CEGSS implemented an exchange workshop around strategic litigation. The workshop was held in Guatemala in October 2019. Three staff members from DEJUSTICIA assisted to facilitate the workshop and share their expertise in strategic litigation while the Guatemala team presented their experience in community-based data and evidence. Key partner organizations of CEGSS participated in the workshop.

### 3. Key results (expected and unexpected) and value added of the LC

CEGSS had the opportunity to develop a new theory of change and strategy following a participatory process with extended consultations with partners. We did not feel the pressure to produce a document in a short timeframe. Rather, the LC allowed us time for reflection and quality discussion among CEGSS staff and the grassroots organizations, our main partners.

The external review of CEGSS M&E system, strategies and procedures, carried out by two LC
partners (MIT GOV/LAB and Dejusticia) was very important to identify gaps and implement actions to improve CEGSS’ M&E and learning.

CEGSS strengthened its approach to involve public service users in accountability and transparency initiatives. It also developed innovative methods to engage ordinary citizens, such as the use of podcasts for capacity building of grassroots organizations.

At the cluster level, CEGSS was able to strengthen learning links with partners and organizations within Guatemala, Latin America and other parts of the world. We have expanded the number of organizations with which we currently collaborate or plan to collaborate in the short term.

4. Main lessons learned

**Importance of flexibility.** Several of the key results were achieved because the resources of the LC were not attached to specific activities within a defined and structured project. CEGSS saw windows of opportunities and used the flexible LC funding to pursue them. Also the flexibility of resources allowed us to implement strategies and activities that we already thought to be of importance but did not have funding to allocate. The majority of funding within CEGSS is attached to specific activities and fixed projects. Hence, having the LC resources was of crucial importance to us.

**Slow implementation related to staff structure and size of organization.** CEGSS is a small organization (12 staff). Even when we had the LC resources available, we faced challenges to free some of our staff to dedicate their time to the innovation, reflection and synthesis activities and actions supported by the LC. The lesson here is that for the future, small organization should prepare themselves and organize a team that can dedicate time to design, field test, facilitate and implement the innovation, learning and synthesis.

**Important of peers and critical friends in a safe space.** In the past we received a couple of grants for institutional strengthening and learning. However, we received the funding from the donors but there was no structure or supporting through other peers. The difference in the LC is the hubs, the resource organizations and the face-to-face exchanges. In our view, a lesson from this experience is that a grant for learning should include both flexible financial resources and a structure to provide peer support to grantees during the implementation process. We would like to highlight the importance of peer exchanges, given that it is very different to provide support as external advisor, external evaluator or as a donor, peer to peer relations creates a safe environment for honest exchange.
1. Introduction

Dejusticia was founded in 2003 and has organically grown into one of the leading human rights organizations in Colombia. The organizational culture and practices were built since the beginning with a strong focus on horizontal, inclusive internal exchange, peer review and deliberation, which led to learning being an intrinsic value of the organization. However, since 2016 the then Executive Director pursued a more explicit approach to organizational learning. That same year, Dejusticia conducted its first collective reflection exercise, building also on the desire of its staff to track their work, both on successes and challenges, with the aim to improve the organization’s effectiveness. In 2018 Dejusticia got two institutional strengthening grants from OSF and the Ford Foundation, including the gradual development of a systematic MEL system to be fully functioning by 2022.

The design and implementation of the LC project coincided with and complemented these efforts. The focus on institutional learning in collaboration with other like-minded organizations, was considered a chance to strengthen Dejusticia’s own efforts and to learn with partners to become more effective.

During the first year of the Collaborative, the coordination of Hub and Cluster-level activities in Dejusticia was managed directly by the Executive Director with punctual support of one staff member. A systematic integration into the organization’s thematic work and informal monitoring and learning practices was not yet pursued.

At the end of 2018, the Executive Director of Dejusticia changed, the organization undertook a review of its organizational structure and conducted a strategic planning exercise for the next three years. All of this, resulted in some adjustments to the strategic objectives and approach as well as the operating model of Dejusticia.

In this context, and with a new Executive Director in place since early 2019 the LC project gained particular value at the hub and cluster levels: i) one existing staff member was assigned as coordinator for hub-level activities; and ii) another existing staff member was assigned for hub and cluster-level activity oversight directly reporting to the ED. Overall, the new ED has given emphasis to actively integrate the objectives of the LC into the activities of Dejusticia (hub) and a series of pilot initiatives with its networks (cluster).
2. Snapshot of activities and main results in the framework of the LC

2.1. Main hub-level activities and results

The following specific activities were realized with the support of the LC project:

- The results of a participatory and peer-organized institutional learning assessment as part of the LC commitment provided inputs for the strengthening of internal learning practices and helped to communicate to staff the relevance of institutional learning.

- The development of a monitoring approach for Dejusticia’s institutional commitments laid the ground for an activity tracking system as well as for the formulation of organizational performance indicators which will be refined in the course of next year.

- The design, facilitation and systematization of the end-of-the-year reflection and learning sessions with all thematic and administrative teams strengthened the internal learning culture and generated crucial inputs for the strategic planning exercise.

- The support for the design, facilitation and development of the new three-year strategic plan helped to broaden and deepen the participation of staff across the organization, to introduce a theory of change focus and to lay the foundation for a systematic monitoring and evaluation approach.

- The development of information systems as institutional memory and source of reference for institutional learning (intranet, an information repository, and an activity registration tool which will evolve into a result monitoring tool over time) helped to strengthen the coherence between planning, monitoring and internal communication.

- The support of internal reflection, feedback and learning spaces (biweekly thematic seminars and research committees as well as peer review of advocacy pieces) contributed to consolidate the learning culture and cross-thematic cooperation.
Systematic review of Dejusticia's experience in strategic litigation

This initiative systematized Dejusticia's experience of 14 years in strategic litigation. Three concrete products identified important results, including the following: i) a data base on the approximately 260 strategic litigation cases that Dejusticia led (15%) or participated in (85%) allowed to identify that 60% of these processes were known by the Constitutional Court due to their judicial importance, that the cases related to gender and LGTB are resolved faster than others, and that the success rate of the cases is around 70%; ii) the design of a homogeneous technical description form of all cases allows to strengthen the institutional memory and makes future exercises more effective in particular in a context with high rotation of researchers to reach a definitive data sheet, the model was applied in 60 cases in which Dejusticia has participated; iii) the identification of the 14 most emblematic cases and the documentation of 5 of those as case studies provide important lessons learned.

This contribution of the LC to an organizational need is greatly valuable for Dejusticia itself, for other LC members and also for the broader community of organizations (see blog on this specific activity at https://www.dejusticia.org/en/learning-collaborative

2.2. Main Cluster-level activities and results

The launch of the Connect Platform, was a significant improvement in Dejusticia's ability to track and build on the results of its human rights courses and helps to connect the alumni for future work. One of the main goals of the School of Human Rights Practice is to strengthen relationships among its graduates (by 2019, 236 of the over 350 signed up). The online platform offers mentorships and job opportunities, provides information on events, human rights reports and academic articles. Connect not only promotes alumni to keep in touch but also to interact with each other.

Dejusticia realized in the beginning of 2019 a mapping of the networks that Dejusticia participates in to identify needs and opportunities for Cluster level learning activities. Three networks were prioritized for activities in the framework of the LC.

The Alianza más Información, más Derechos, a network of CSOs working on Access to information in Colombia, conducted a strategic planning process, which resulted a new strategic focus, clarified rules of engagement, renewed commitment for collective action and a first collaborative assessment of the current state of access to information in the country. The CEDD (for its acronym in Spanish “Colectivo de Estudios de Drogas y Derecho”) integrated a reflection and learning perspective into an internal evaluation of the network in order to strengthen its effectiveness and operating model.

The Network for the Strengthening of the Inter-American System of Human Rights identified the opportunity to draw on experiences from other Human Rights Systems in the world, organized an insightful exchange and reviewed its reactive strategy focused on damage control to change towards a proactive advocacy modus...
operandi with regular reflections on progress and failure to be better equipped to confront the multiple attacks on the Inter-American System of Human Rights.

See specific blogs on these experiences at https://www.dejusticia.org/en/learning-collaborative

2.3. Main bilateral activities with other LC members and results

The expert support from the resource organization MIT GOV/LAB to develop indicators for institutional commitments, to design an activity registration tool, and to conduct the institutional peer learning assessment, helped to increase institutional openness and awareness about the value of organizational learning and MEL.

The methodological design and realization of a training workshop with CEGSS and its partners on strategic litigation to strengthen Guatemalan human rights defenders in judicial strategy design, communication and social mobilization for strategic litigation was highly valued and generated demand for future collaboration in this field.

Dejusticia created a microsite, hosted on its own website, to present the LC, its experiences, and results to interested stakeholders.

3. Key results and value added of the LC

Dejusticia understood this project as an opportunity to strengthen existing processes adding value to the learning component. The strategic relevance of learning and the operational importance of monitoring is widely recognized among the leadership and staff as elements that help to be more effective and to achieve the institutional mission.

In this sense, the contribution of the LC was key in articulating and integrating large institutional strengthening projects with Dejusticia’s thematic work, through the coherent implementation of monitoring systems, processes and tools.

In addition, institutional spaces for reflection, exchange, peer review and collective learning have been consolidated, firmly anchored in regular practice, and are being reviewed periodically for their usefulness and effectiveness.

Particularly, the strategic litigation project allowed Dejusticia to put one of its key working methods into perspective and to understand the particularities of judicial activism. The results of this project are also useful for interested allies and partners.
The work with Dejusticia’s networks demonstrated the great value of reflection and learning exercises for periodic reviews of the strategic focus, working approaches and operating models of the networks in order to ensure and improve effectiveness. The results of the initial pilots with the three networks provide an important basis for further reflection and learning practices as well as inspirations to be adapted to other networks.

4. Main lessons learned

For Dejusticia as a Hub, the Collaborative project was very important in the context of a broader institutional strengthening effort. The transition of Dejusticia towards a more institutional funded organization and the strategic planning process allowed to articulate and harmonize processes and to connect the learning activities and practices more coherently. This guarantees continuity after the LC project finalizes.

The implementation of the project showed the importance to count with a senior management that is convinced of the value of learning systems and practice and engaged in creating internal conditions, both in terms of staff and processes, to make them work.

In the same line, it is crucial to have clearly defined roles and responsibilities for the implementation of learning practices and/or systems, as well as clear reporting and accountability lines. Ideally, there would be a continuity of the people in charge and in case of changes an appropriate hand-over needs to be ensured.

The processes, activities and mechanisms to foster institutional learning have to be adapted not only to the institutional needs but also to everyday work habits and organizational culture in order to achieve the required appropriation by staff. In this sense, the sequence of learning sessions at the end of 2018, the participatory strategic planning and the development of a monitoring tool in 2019 accompanied by focused communication helped to create an increasingly accepted internal narrative on the value of reflection and learning.

It is useful to create systems that pay great attention to the respective organizational culture. E.g. in addition to compliance with institutional requirements like reporting and monitoring, these processes should be clearly linked to the organizational mission. This motivates staff to actively participate without overloading them with more work.

The consolidation of learning processes, structures and practice takes time and requires regular and continuous support, both from the highest level of the leadership and the operational level. It is important to bear in mind that related “marketing” efforts are in almost direct relation with the level of appropriation.
Global Integrity

1. Introduction

Global Integrity is a small nonprofit organization based in Washington, DC. We support partners in countries and communities around the world as they seek to reduce corruption and improve the delivery of public services. We do this in the following ways:

- Providing direct support to partners—frontline civil society organizations (CSOs) and local governments, international nongovernmental organizations (INGOs), and private foundations—as they work to understand and address complex challenges related to corruption and the misuse of public resources; and

- Using the evidence and insights from that work in our advocacy and engagement, helping put locally led innovation, learning, and adaptation at the center of the governance and development agenda.

At the outset of the Learning Collaborative project, we reached out to several partners—including those with whom we had worked in the past few years in Colombia, Kenya, Mexico, South Africa, and Tanzania—to explore whether and how we might work together to address key challenges—especially learning challenges faced by partners. Learning has long been central to Global Integrity, and supporting iterative cycles of action and learning are at the core of the work we do. However, as of January 2018, we had only just begun to implement a nascent, organization wide monitoring, evaluation, and learning (MEL) system. This MEL system had not yet been tested, nor was it clear whether and how it might provide a platform for systematizing and integrating learning across projects, programs, or the organization at-large.

2. Snapshot of activities conducted in the framework of LC

Global Integrity carried out many activities that took place at various levels—within Global Integrity itself, within the Collaborative, and with our cluster / network partners. Following is a brief snapshot of work at each of these levels. For more detail, please follow the links provided.

2.1. Main Hub-level activities

Support from the Learning Collaborative enabled us to dedicate significant staff time to redesigning and implementing Global Integrity’s approach to strategic MEL, such as:
- Craft theories of change and annual implementation plans for each of our programs;
- Design fit-for-purpose MEL frameworks for each program, as well as the organization as a whole, so there is an integrated MEL system that cuts across all projects and programs;
- Collect evidence on designated indicators on a quarterly basis;
- Reflect on collected evidence, identify emerging lessons and challenges, and consider adaptations to programmatic implementation plans; and
- Hold quarterly reflective learning sessions at both program and organizational levels.

2.2. Main Cluster-level activities

Global Integrity carried out a number of cluster-level activities with the support of LC resources. We carried out select advocacy efforts focused, in particular, on the Open Government Partnership and its stakeholders and aimed at strengthening the extent to which the Partnership encourages and supports learning among and across its members.

Activities focused primarily on providing strategic learning support to key partners working in the Global South in response to requests for support, including providing help analyzing problems confronted; strategizing about how to address those problems; and designing and implementing practices that aim to help our partners more effectively address those problems over time. Cluster-level activities also provided an opportunity to both test and learn about Global Integrity’s services, and strengthen the quality of partners’ approach to strategic learning.

Constitution Reform and Education Consortium (CRECO) — Kenya
- May 2018–May 2019: Provided virtual and in-person support to CRECO as they designed and implemented a project on strengthening agricultural governance in two Kenyan counties.
- June–October 2019: Along with CEGSS, facilitated a strategy refresh for CRECO. Their emerging strategy and learning framework will shape CRECO’s work on governance in Kenya, and beyond, through 2023. (For more, please see report, produced with and for CRECO.)

- RESULTS: CRECO reports that they have been able to: interrogate assumptions embedded in their project logic about how change might happen; respond to unanticipated developments; implement their project more effectively than they otherwise would have; and strengthen their capacity to develop and deploy effective learning practices on future projects.
**Public Service Accountability Monitor (PSAM)—South Africa**
- June–September 2018: Worked with PSAM to design and implement a workshop for around 20 of their subnational partners. The workshop focused on strengthening fit-for-purpose, adaptive MEL that can inform strategic decision-making in complex contexts.
- **RESULTS:** Several workshop participants have since begun to implement MEL systems in their own organizations so they can more effectively collect and use data to identify challenges and learn, adapt, and improve effectiveness.

**Tamasha—Tanzania**
- June–December 2018: Building on a previous partnership, worked with Tamasha to design and implement an adaptive learning framework for a multi-district project.
- **RESULTS:** We were not able to make as much progress as initially envisioned, given the closing civic space in Tanzania; Tamasha appreciated our support, even though conditions negatively affected their ability to implement the project.

**Burotic—Colombia**
- June 2018–June 2019: Provided support to Burotic as they tested methods for engaging stakeholders in government and civil society in efforts to use data, helping to design several learning and reflection tools, and facilitating several staff reflection sessions.
- June–October 2019: Provided more intensive support as Burotic designed and began testing a new platform housing data on municipal spending in Bogota.
- **RESULTS:** Learning and reflection tools used to explore formal partnerships with different user groups and collect evidence on how to effectively engage citizens in monitoring public service delivery. For more on our work with Burotic, and what we’ve learned together, please see this [impact story](#) and [guide](#), in which lessons are shared.

**CIVICUS—International**
- August 2018–May 2019: Provided strategy and learning support to CIVICUS, specifically helping to reflect on Resilient Roots project, redesign MEL framework, and collect evidence to inform how they might provide more effective support to the CSOs with whom they work.
- **RESULTS:** CIVICUS reported that early results are promising. As part of their ongoing strategy refresh process, CIVICUS also is exploring what they can do to support more participatory, collective approaches to learning with their partners beyond Resilient Roots.
Center for International Enterprise (CIPE)—International
- June–August 2019: Worked with CIPE to design a new anti-corruption rapid-response program, which entailed several virtual and in-person conversations, as well as designing and facilitating a short Theory of Change workshop for program staff.
- RESULTS: The Theory of Change that emerged from our workshop is now guiding the implementation of the actual program, as well as CIPE’s MEL strategy moving forward.

INAI, GESOC, and other local partners—Veracruz, Chihuahua, and Cozumel, Mexico
- June–October 2019: Provided support to several partners in Mexico, building on previous work and focusing on facilitating multistakeholder processes through which our partners could construct a network of local stakeholders to work on municipal open contracting and improve accountability in the use of public resources and municipal planning.
- RESULTS: Because the work was widely varied, please read the following on results:
  - Veracruz impact story, in which we reflect on our partnership with GESOC, a Mexican civil society organization, and with other organizations working in the state of Veracruz.
  - Chihuahua and Cozumel reflection report and impact story
  - Overarching reflection report synthesizing our work in Mexico.

Open Gov Hub Collaboration Fund—Various Locations
- September–October 2019: Launched a learning and collaboration fund at the Open Gov Hub, through which we provided mini grants to four organizations: CoRE & Akvo, and CIPE & Unfunded List. These grants will support the implementation of joint activities, through which participating organizations work and learn together as they attempt to address issues of common concern. (Read reflections.)

2.3. Main inter-Hub activities
- Provided light-touch support to Twaweza and CEGSS throughout 2018 and in the first half of 2019, as they assessed, considered, and worked to improve their organizational learning practices; held several virtual consultations and provided detailed feedback on draft versions of Theories of Change and MEL frameworks for both organizations.
- Worked with LC facilitators on baseline LC-wide learning assessments.
3. Key results and value added of the LC

3.1. Hub-level results

Global Integrity now has a stronger learning system and a set of collectively owned learning practices in place. Our revamped MEL system provides a platform for collaborative reflection, learning, and action across our programs and projects.

We are learning and adapting more systematically and intentionally and, based on evidence collected thus far in 2019, accelerating progress toward our intended impact, both with respect to the in-country partners, and shaping global policy and practice on governance.

3.2. Cluster-level results

Global Integrity has deployed and tested our services in a variety of contexts, with different partners, enabling us to learn about the effectiveness of those services and explore the ways in which we can tailor them to better meet partner needs.

The organizations with whom we worked have benefited as we have been able to share learnings on how to improve their own learning practices and leverage adaptive learning in order to make more effective progress toward achieving the outcomes they care about.

3.3. Inter-Hub results

Coordinated with Twaweza with regard to work with Tamasha in Tanzania;

Loosely coordinated joint venture with CEGSS, focused on learning among frontline organizations, providing a platform for working and learning together. A stronger relationship between Global Integrity and CEGSS may pave the way for more substantive collaboration.

4. Main lessons learned

4.1. Lessons from Hub-level work

There is tremendous value in dedicating staff time and resources to designing, implementing, and supporting use of an internal learning system.
It may have been useful to take an even more participatory approach to our MEL system.

Effective learning practices—and the systems and processes that aim to support learning practices—are themselves iterative, flexible, and adaptive.

### 4.2. Lessons from Cluster-level work

With regards to the nature of our engagements with potential partners: *we provide better support when we’re able to learn alongside our partners in the longer term.*

Our work with cluster-level partners demonstrated that *our most effective role is that of a critical friend,* willing to listen and learn alongside local partners.

### 4.3. Lessons from Inter-Hub work

*There is great value in critical friendship.* Other members of the Learning Collaborative helped us to generate insights into how learning takes place within Global Integrity, and to offer ideas about how we might strengthen our internal learning practices. The external perspective offered by these friends, when combined with their familiarity with our organization, and the work that we’re trying to do, was invaluable.

*Sustaining collaboration, including collaboration around learning, across organizations is hard, especially in the absence of proactive facilitation.* Supporting peer learning and action across organizations and networks requires an active, engaged facilitation function. That’s not a new lesson for Global Integrity, but our experience with the Collaborative has helped to reconfirm its importance, and we will aim to make sure this lesson informs our own facilitation work in the future.
Twaweza

1. Introduction

Twaweza East Africa is a Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) established in 2009 for the aims of promoting citizen agency and pushing for greater Government accountability (responsive authorities). We work in the three East African Countries of Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda. Twaweza is in its second year of its third strategy (2019-2022). Our current strategy builds on the successes and lessons from the previous two strategy periods (2009-2014 and 2015-2018) as well as responding to a changing and uncertain civic space context in the region.

As an organization working on complex problems involving multiple actors, strategies and tactics, learning has been an important element of Twaweza’s DNA. We have always organized diverse monitoring, evaluation and learning sessions internally and externally with partners and collaborators. Broadly, we are guided by adaptive and collaborative management approaches. However, it is important to note that the Learning Collaborative initiative came at a time when we really needed to reflect and revamp our learning agenda. Internally, we had embarked on the process of developing a new organizational strategy (2019-2022) that involves transitioning off our education domain and focus on the governance domain only.

Externally, the context of shrinking civic space threatened our very existence as a civil society and affected the timely execution of our programs. Moreover, the problems of limited citizen agency, shrinking civic space and unresponsive governments that we aim to contribute in addressing are complex and dynamic ones requiring adoption of adaptive and collaborative approaches. The changing and uncertain civic space context in the region has also affected the relationships and interactions among and between civil society organizations and other key stakeholders, particularly the government.

In addition to internal (hub) level learning, learning with partners (cluster level) has become more important as part of our working in improved coalitions. We believe that in order to effectively promote and protect open civic space, we need to contribute towards maintaining, expanding and diversifying the range of usual and unusual actors working on governance/TAP issues.

2. Snapshot of activities conducted in the framework of the LC

2.1. Main hub-level activities

*New strategy (2019-2022) and its accompanying ToC:* Therefore, in 2018 we spent a significant amount of time finalizing our new strategy (2019-2022). We conducted several internal evaluation and learning sessions to reflect on what worked well and what did not work very well to
inform the new strategy. We also conducted several strategy sessions involving our partners and other key actors. For instance, thanks to this Learning Collaborative, we organized an event dubbed -- *Ideas and Evidence Event*. We invited researchers/academics, practitioners and other key actors on governance issues from East Africa and beyond for collective reflections (see [https://oxfamblogs.org/fp2p/bruised-but-better-the-stronger-case-for-evidence-based-activism-in-east-africa/](https://oxfamblogs.org/fp2p/bruised-but-better-the-stronger-case-for-evidence-based-activism-in-east-africa/)).

**Deepening our learning agenda:** Our internal learning agenda includes learning and reflections sessions. These include Tuesday morning learning sessions, organizational meetings, food for thought events, skills lab sessions and reading club sessions, among others. During this reporting period, our participation in the LC prompted us to try new ways of organizing these learning activities to improve our organizational learning culture especially as we embarked on developing and implementing a new strategy while experiencing more restrictions due to shrinking civic space context. As a result, we introduced a new quarterly management reporting structure, diversified the way we organize our Tuesday learning sessions and introduced a new element to our Monday staff meetings. So far, there is an appreciable level of excitement among staff towards learning activities.

**Immersion 2019, June in Pangani District, Tanga (44 staff participated):** This is an annual activity whereby all staff travel to one district in one of the three countries where we implement our work and stay with host families for three days. The aims of this activity are three-fold: to learn about the people whose lives we want to contribute in changing through our programs; to test our assumptions about how change happens (ToC); and to check the appropriateness/validity of our objectives and programs. This year, with the additional funding from the LC we added three more days for to provide adequate time for post immersion debriefing to check whether we attained the intended objectives; to organize a strategy session to orient all staff to our new governance strategy; and to organize team building activities and interactions with the District Council as part of celebrating Twaweza’s 10th anniversary. Staff expressed their appreciation of the revisions.

**Critical feedback from key stakeholders:** In 2017 we engaged an external consultant to conduct an exercise of gathering critical and constructive feedback from friends of Twaweza in Tanzania, such as individuals holding senior positions in the public sector, development partners, civil society, media and politicians. This year, we solicited critical and constructive feedback from friends and non-friends of Twaweza and we expanded the number from about 15 to over 30. Moreover, we conducted this exercise in Uganda and Tanzania while previously we only covered Tanzania, and intend to cover Kenya in the near future. Most respondents appreciated being consulted for feedback and noted that few organizations value learning to that extent.
2.2. Main cluster-level activities

We have carried out a number of learning activities with partner organizations in existing networks in Tanzania and Uganda. However, given the funding arrangement at Twaweza, we cannot attribute the support for these activities entirely to the LC project. Therefore, we are summarizing here cluster level activities that we feel are directly relevant to the objectives of the LC project.

In November 2019, we conducted learning exchange visits with two organizations in Uganda. The first day we met with Chapter4: an NGO that works to promote and protect human rights in Uganda. We held a half-day informal conversation about their work and how they manage to promote and protect human rights and democratic principles in the context of shrinking civic space. We particularly focused on their application of strategic litigation as an advocacy strategy that we at Twaweza have introduced in our current strategy. The second day we visited Raising Voices. With them we learned about both internal and external learning. We focused on several aspects including how to build a culture of inter-unit collaboration within the organization, how to ensure that staff understand and live the organizational values. In addition, we have undertaken learning reflections with partner organizations in our networks in Tanzania in order to contribute to building the advocacy and organizational capacity of partner organizations to ensure that there are more capable civil society organizations working towards achieving shared goals.

The cluster level learning activities can broadly be referred to as “learning for improved coalition-based policy engagement and advocacy”. We received an invitation from the Parliament to provide inputs to the draft Political Parties Act scheduled for January 15, 2019. Given the gravity of the proposed amendments, we decided to coordinate our efforts and send a joint and strong message to the Government that we are determined to resist passing of repressive laws. However, reflecting on past experience as one of the guiding principles for this coalition, we decided to review: what worked well and what did not and how to strategize moving forward. We organized planning and reflections sessions before, during and after parliamentary submissions for continued engagement and advocacy. Lessons learned during our engagement on the Political Parties Act have informed our subsequent engagement and advocacy on proposed amendments to existing laws, in 2019 alone on over 30 laws. We have continued to work in a coalition and to emphasize regular reflections as soon as we receive Parliamentary invitations, during public hearing at the Parliament and after parliamentary proceedings.

2.3. Main inter-hub activities

Apart from our participation in the LC coordinating activities, such as monthly conference calls and a
few in person meetings, we did not participate in any inter-hub activities. The reasons for this are described in detail in the main LC report.

3. Key results achieved (expected and unexpected) and value added of the LC

The LC contributed to shepherding Twaweza through a number of significant developments:

- Developing a new strategy. The LC was an important intellectual companion to Twaweza’s team in formulating an ambitious risky strategy.

- Providing a strong, supportive but flexible conceptual anchor for a new Learning and Strategy team at Twaweza.

- Providing a neutral, trusted framework for evaluating our activities in a dynamic (dangerous) political economy environment.

- Helping us to balance between execution for immediate outcomes (e.g., stopping/amending a bad law) and reflection to evaluate, learn and adjust as we proceed.

4. Main lessons learned

4.1. Hub level lessons

As we embarked on implementing our new strategy, the main focus for our internal learning agenda has been to reflect on past experience while also learning from others’ experience. Given the individual and organizational risks associated with pursuing governance related work under the context of shrinking civic space, our learning agenda has also focused on enhancing staff’s understanding of the new strategy and enhance their confidence. Although we are yet to assess staff’s knowledge, confidence and motivation/excitement for the new strategy, anecdotal feedback indicates effective learning has been happening so far.

We need to continue consulting our staff in identification of learning needs and providing feedback on learning events. Generally, adopting participatory approaches in designing and assessing effectiveness of learning activities has generated more excitement about learning.

We have also learned that we need to vary the learning activities and approaches. Diversifying learning activities has resulted into more effective learning activities. We have realized that we need to allocate more time on learning activities about our own work (e.g. our strategy or our organizational values and principles).

Internal coordination across units remains a challenge especially for units to share their plans and progress for learning purposes. There is reluctance to share plans and work in progress. We are still pondering about ways of encouraging our staff to share their preliminary plans and progress.
We need to demonstrate the importance of sharing plans and progress in their initial stages.

4.2. Cluster level lessons

In the past we have actively participated in several networks and coalitions. We experienced several challenges and as a result, realizing that partnering with like-minded organizations is inevitable, we decided to reflect and strategize on how to improve our collaborative initiatives.

**Approaches taken:** we have realized the importance of adopting multiple strategies and tactics in engaging with the various stakeholders as well as the importance of continued pressure beyond the parliamentary proceedings;

**Partners involved:** we appreciated the broadening of partners to include religious leaders and artists who are not viewed as being antagonistic by the Government hence improve effects of our advocacy strategies; we have learned the importance of leading by example by starting with a few key partners to demonstrate seriousness and quality required to set the tone for other interested partners (we do not have to wait to have many partners, a few can start and lead the process, and others will join as we proceed); we have learned not to be too quick in judging partners and instead pay attention to the factors enabling and/or constraining them and helping them unblock the constraining factors for effective collaboration and coalition building.

**Clarity of purpose:** we have realized that clarity of key communication messages and focusing on a few key issues is very important for effective advocacy and that reaching consensus on key messages requires tolerance to differing views and adequately substantiating our claims.

**Processes for getting the activities going:** the ad-hoc and reactionary nature of policy advocacy requires expedient and efficient decision making, analysis and operations. It is exhausting. We have learned the importance of having flexible funding arrangement like Twaweza’s core funding approach. It took several weeks for our partner organizations to be able to release funds to facilitate these activities. We have also learned that in order to motivate and encourage each other, we need to continue supporting, appreciating everyone’s contribution and celebrate even the small achievements we make. This is crucial to maintain high energy levels for difficult policy engagement.

**Results identification:** As summarized above, we have realized that it is important to spend as much time as necessary in discussing and agreeing on key results for effective implementation afterwards. It requires deliberate listening skills and communicating very clearly and respecting diversity of opinions.
Annex II: Learning Collaborative Theory of Change

Collaborative members’ networks adapt their own strategies for learning to strengthen progress towards TAP outcomes.

TAP networks linked to Collaborative members learn from the collaborative members experiences and are inclined to try adaptive learning strategies.

Hubs conduct various activities to implement systematic, reflective, learning monitoring practices internally with support from other Collaborative members.

Hub organizations strengthen internal learning, monitoring and evaluation capabilities with support from collaborative members and others.

Collaborative members are open to taking risks and trying new strategies internally and with partners.

Collaborative members learn from each others experiences of implementing learning and adaptation strategies and adjust their own strategies.

Collaborative members are able to clarify links between learning approaches/strategies and their own TAP outcomes.

Collaborative members have enough motivation to work with each other on learning strategies and activities.

Learning activities executed by Collaborative members are relevant to making progress towards TAP Outcomes.

Various levels of activities and exchanges are sufficiently monitored.

Collaborative members will be able to link changes in learning practices to changes in achieving TAP Outcomes.

Hubs internal learning and adaptation strategies affect progress towards own TAP outcomes.

Collaborative members and their partners clarify connection between learning practices and TAP outcomes.

TAP field learns from Collaborative experience.

Collaborative learning contributes to progress towards TAP outcomes among members and other TAP CSOs.

Note: This Theory of Change aims to elaborate the main activities, intermediate outcomes and critical assumptions underlying the Collaborative’s approach and has been developed based on the Collaborative’s Results Framework. Key research questions that members hope to address through the collaborative activities are depicted at points along the pathway of change where enough progress would have been made on intermediate outcomes in order to begin answering these questions.