

# COLMEAL



Community-Led Monitoring, Evaluation,  
Accountability and Learning



In partnership with



## What is CoLMEAL?

Community-Led Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning (CoLMEAL) is an innovative approach that intentionally and systematically places people, all community members, at the forefront of community-led development. CoLMEAL mobilizes the community's potential to develop the goals, solutions, and metrics for their desired future and to assert their ownership of community data, and equips them with the power of effective data use as evidence for advocacy. CoLMEAL reinforces the agency of women and men of all ages to take an active role in decisions affecting their lives especially those who might be otherwise excluded due to pre-existing vulnerabilities or power imbalances.

As CoLMEAL builds on existing community-based processes and structures, it requires good understanding of actors and power-holders in the community and an analysis of the power dynamics among them. It draws from the voices of different groups of people emphasizing the importance of actively engaging people who are vulnerable or marginalized. It also amplifies the feminist approach to development by embracing feminist principles and building upon them; including the analyses of gender and power relations as well as people with intersecting vulnerabilities.



“ If my kids ask me what **CoLMEAL** is, I would tell them that CoLMEAL is for them, and that it identifies steps to reach our goal of reducing cases of teenage pregnancy, early marriage, and violence. ”

Joven E. Sta. Rosa  
40-year-old male with 3 female children,  
fisherman, CoLMEAL Committee member



**CoLMEAL is not another participatory monitoring approach as it is not meant to be used by development organizations for their monitoring and evaluation purposes.**

CoLMEAL is meant to enhance the evidence-based aspect of community-initiated and led projects by ensuring the presence of a MEAL component, owned, designed and implemented by the community themselves.

# Why CoLMEAL is a game-changer



## Community at the driver's seat of change

CoLMEAL veers away from the traditional community development process commonly driven by donors and projects where agenda is set from a distance. CoLMEAL instead guides communities through the design of their own theory of change, vision of success, and measures to track their progress towards the goals they set.



## Increased agency of community members whose voices are commonly not heard

CoLMEAL intentionally and systematically includes and amplifies the voices of people who are commonly marginalized or are facing various intersecting vulnerabilities. CoLMEAL provides the space for marginalized groups to participate in the process beyond the initial stages of community organizing such as during consultations or assessments as is the usual case. Through their active engagement in the CoLMEAL processes from end to end, they not only build their self-esteem and get heard but also actively define community actions and influence policy that would likely affect them the most.



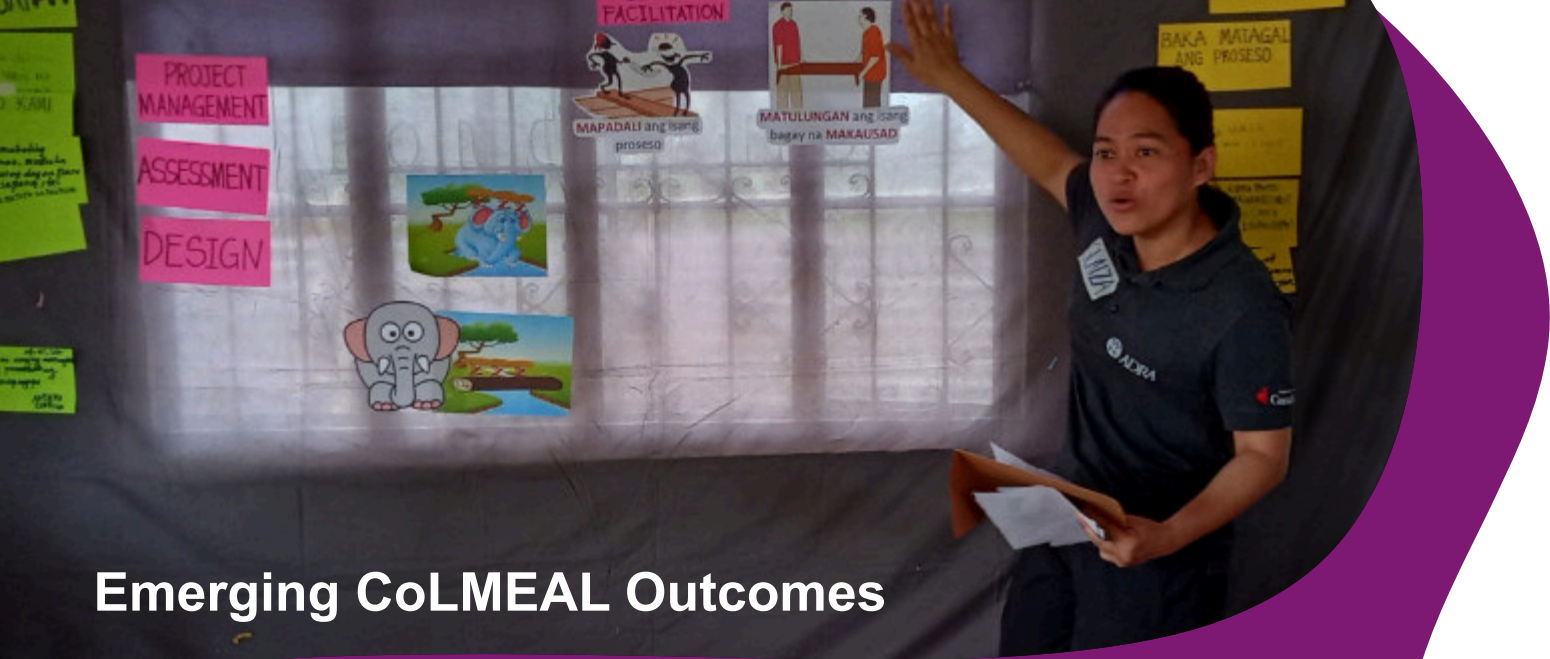
## Community ownership of data management and use as evidence

CoLMEAL shifts the role of communities from respondents or objects of observation to active leaders in the management of data processes and use. CoLMEAL also enhances the community's data literacy and analytical skills, and taps into existing data management systems at the community level and beyond as foundation for pragmatic, evidence-based decision-making.



## Promotion of evidence-informed community advocacy

When policymakers understand the lived experiences of members of the community, success in policy advocacy is more likely. Communities can hold their leaders accountable by presenting factual and contextual information about relevant community issues and the impact of policies or actions taken. CoLMEAL strengthens the capacity and confidence of community members to fill critical data gaps at the local level and use it as evidence to effectively advocate for changes that would positively affect their lives.

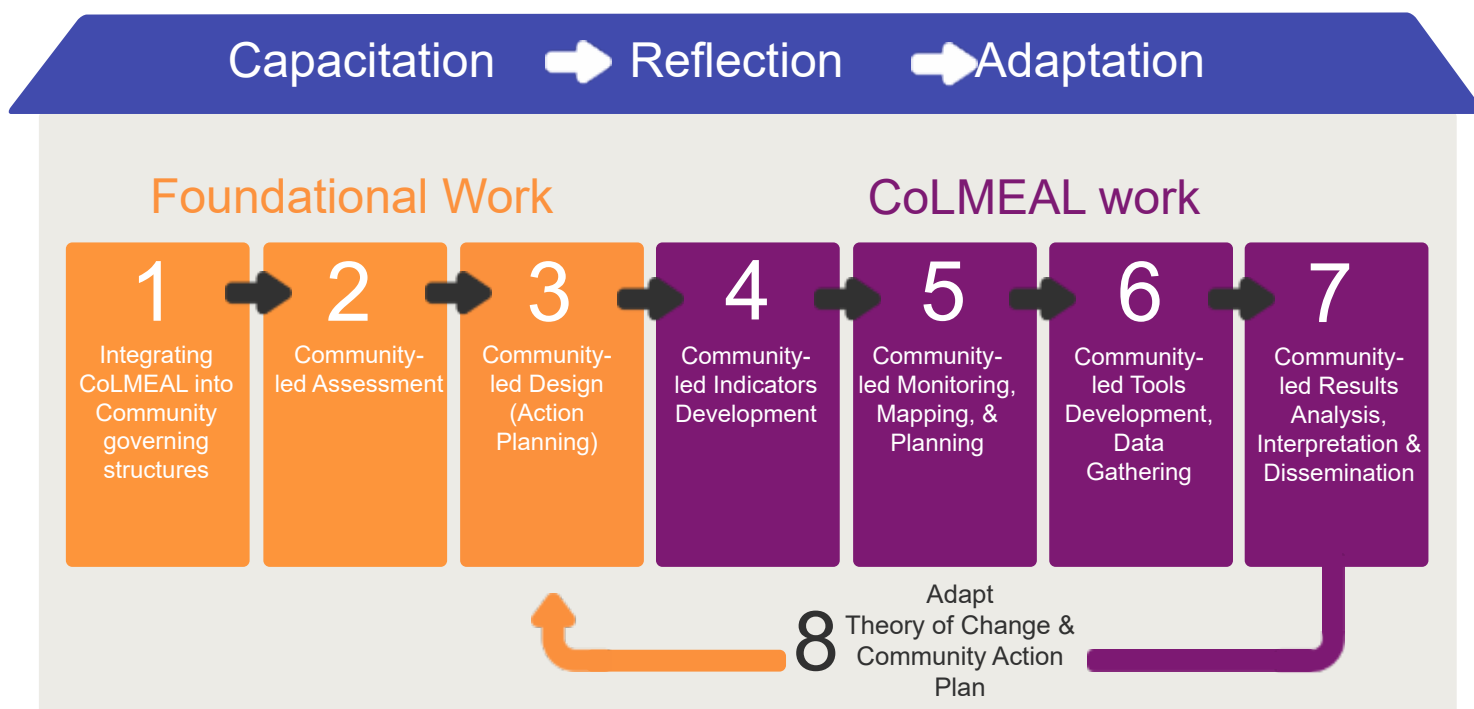


## Emerging CoLMEAL Outcomes

### More sustainable and equitable social change

When all the afore-mentioned elements come together in synergy, communities develop a culture of critical inquiry, reflection, and the practice of contributing meaningfully and systematically to the development of their society. Communities are then better equipped in addressing challenges, and identifying and implementing solutions confronting them beyond the scope of external development actors or even without any presence of development organizations. It also advances the localized development agenda of accountability to affected people, viewing communities not as passive recipients of aid but as citizens with agency over their own development.

## What is the CoLMEAL process?



# Where is CoLMEAL implemented?

Case study of TOGETHER and BRIGHT Projects implemented by ADRA, funded by Global Affairs Canada

## Sudan

2 adopting communities in West Darfur

## Myanmar

3 adopting communities in Northern Shan

## Cambodia

26 adopting communities in Santuk, Kampong Thom, and Preah Vihear

## Uganda

10 adopting communities in Agago, Kitgum, Lamwo, and Pader

## Kenya

15 adopting communities in Turkana West

## Philippines

6 adopting communities in Camarines Sur



Country	CoLMEAL Aims
Sudan	Address barriers to health rights enjoyment of women and girls (focus areas: unwanted pregnancy, forced marriages and all forms of gender-based violence)
Myanmar	
Kenya	
Uganda	
Cambodia	
Philippines	Understand the priority issues and needs, and the planned change and actions of the community
Cambodia	

# How we know that we are making a difference

## Finding women's voices in addressing GBV

In Kumele Wicere in Uganda, CoLMEAL enabled people to explore why gender-based violence (GBV) exists in their community and what they could do about it. It also helped them to understand how they could reflect on their progress and determine trends in GBV as they take action towards their goal of reducing GBV.

Before CoLMEAL, it was not a common for women to take part in discussing issues affecting their community and taking part in public matters according to what matters to them. They are not usually consulted and even when they are, the structure of discussions does not provide sufficient space for them to be heard. CoLMEAL explicitly sought the participation of women not only by requesting them to share their thoughts, but more importantly, by requesting for their votes in setting the community priorities. Women voted for the inclusion of polygamy as part of the root causes of GBV, and this issue may not have been included in the change pathway if women were not involved.

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A woman speaks about what this approach means to her. "It was so interesting that my choices as a woman are now being counted. When we used the leaves to prioritize issues and their root causes, I was happy that the leaves I put in the ranking table were counted. Before CoLMEAL, there was no system for prioritizing what women want," she says.

Men are appreciative of the process as well. A 36-year-old male farmer expresses his confidence in the potential of CoLMEAL to help their community. "CoLMEAL is about our lives. It also brings our community together. It has taught us a lot about doing things by ourselves. I would invite more community members so that they see the benefits of participating in the discussion. I hope you can visit more communities so you can teach them how to help themselves," he says.





## Strengthening data literacy towards policy development

A CoLMEAL Committee was organized in a community in the Philippines which was trained by ADRA staff on the MEAL aspects of community-led development. Marife Relos, 50-year-old female, a local health worker and member of the CoLMEAL Committee, developed a certain level of confidence in managing data. She attended the training and participated in the design of indicators, development of survey tool, and data collection and analysis.

When the results were presented to the village leader, he questioned the data because the survey respondents included mostly economically-challenged people in the community and less of the more well-off members. He said that because of this, the results may not reflect reality. “But we did random sampling, so it reflects reality!” Marife said in response. Another elected local official wanted to determine a subset of the data presented, specifically, which communities had the highest number of poorest households in order to support the government’s resource allocation of social protection. Marife suggested organizing the data in two ways including percentage calculation and data disaggregation to help the village council understand better the composition of the community.

Both of these instances exhibit Marife’s data literacy, a practical knowledge honed by CoLMEAL, which allows communities to assert their ownership of community data as well as their leadership in its use.



Could CoLMEAL help find solutions in your context?

Learn more on: [salanga.org/colmeal](http://salanga.org/colmeal)

# Who we are

**Salanga** is a high-impact, collaborative consultancy organization operating on social enterprise principles, providing tools, training, and technology services in monitoring, evaluation, accountability, and learning (MEAL) to organizations globally. We make MEAL meaningful.

We champion inclusive and community-led approaches in program design as well innovative solutions in data collection, analysis, and database design. Our multidisciplinary team has supported over 200 organizations in MEAL. We live and work around the world and have two main offices: in Ottawa, Canada and Prague, Czechia.

**ADRA** is the development and humanitarian agency of the Seventh-day Adventist Church since 1985. ADRA works with communities in Canada and around the world so that all may live as God intended. ADRA Canada is part of the global ADRA network operating in more than 100 countries, working with the most vulnerable people regardless of their gender, ethnicity, religious association or political affiliation.

By partnering and learning with local communities, organizations and governments, we are able to deliver culturally relevant programs and mutually share capacities for sustainable change. Our on-the-ground approach allows immediate assistance in times of crisis, as well as enduring partnerships and long-term trusting relationships.

**ADRA Canada & Salanga are privileged to partner with communities around the world in championing CoLMEAL, thanks to the support of Global Affairs Canada.**



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