



STRATEGY & PRACTICE

Community Impact Projects Model (CIPM)

A reflective guide to
designing Community
Impact Projects as a concept



Civil Connections

Building robust communities



THE GUIDE



Step-by-step
process to
understanding
communities,



ABOUT CIVIL CONNECTIONS

INTRODUCTION

Founded in September 2018, Civil Connections is an international non – government organization based in Copenhagen – Denmark. The aim of Civil Connections is to increase value and achievement in international development initiatives at local grassroots communities, by building bridges to and for commonly unreached local grassroots actors especially in the rural areas, to be central in defining how this takes place.

With a base of members and supporters across the globe, we have strong will and commitment to identifying local development actors – especially those rarely found on the mainstream development radar, and facilitating, motivating, and mentoring them to keep believing in their work, as well as amplifying their contribution to global development.

To this end, we actively work with engaging all types of actors on the necessity and benefits of strategically focusing on local rural grassroots as a domain of high presence of inequalities. And of course, it is here over 70%, and in some regions up to over 85% of the global population – commonly the poorest and most vulnerable have their livelihoods (UN, 2018). Indeed, targeting local grassroots, especially rural ones, is a decisive focus to bring the most vulnerable, yet commonly unseen and in some cases unreached communities on board the international development agenda.





OUR APPROACH:

Our working with partners and grassroots development actors bases on four strategic objectives, including:

- Amplifying grassroots voices
- Sustained capacity building
- Resource mobilization and financing
- Long-term motivation and mentoring

Read more: <https://civilconnections.org>

MISSION AND VISION

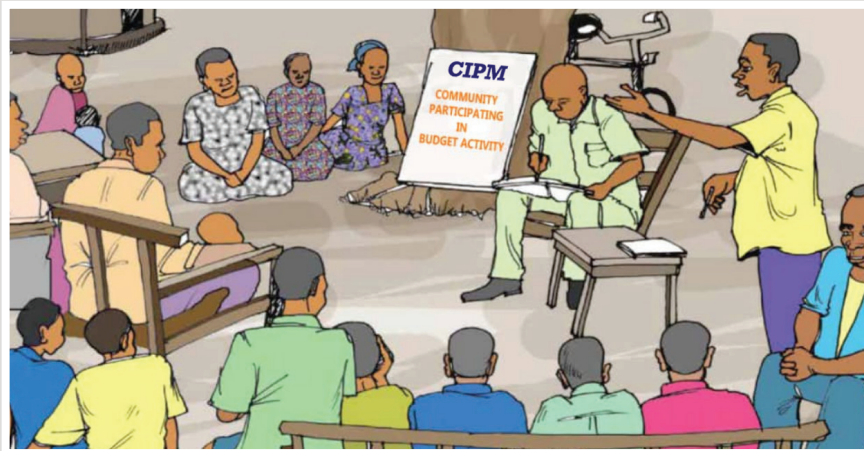
Our vision is a world where local grassroots development actors (NGOs, CBOs, associations, groups, social enterprises, etc.) have adequate capacities, sustainable approaches, tools, methods, and sustained dedication to achieve their development objectives in facilitating community development.

Our mission is to support local grassroots development actors (with special attention to rural) to achieve their aims in facilitating community development for a fair and sustainable world.



OUR GUIDING PRINCIPLES

1. Local communities need to be in the driving seat.
2. Homegrown/context-based solutions are more sustainable than imported ones.
3. If over 70% of the world population is rural, then rural is where the most solutions and support should be targeted.
4. The idea of “leaving no one behind” means being aware of who is left behind and who leaves them behind!
5. We need a genuine critical mass.



ABOUT THE GUIDE:

This guide introduces our Community Impact Projects Model (CIPM) and Community Impact Projects (CIPs) as a concept. To this end, the guide provides a step-by-step process to understanding these, why CIPs and the CIPM are important, as well as practical suggestions on how to design CIPs.

The model is suitable for anyone who works with projects, or initiatives where aspects of quick impact are considered as the focus. We developed the guide to purposely support development of CIPs in communities with low resources or where we have low funding, to give us a backbone for building impact fast and at low cost.

The guide is divided into two sections as follows:

Part 1: Presents the CIPM and CIPs in depth.

Part 2: Presents selected examples of CIPs at Civil Connections.

We hope you find the guide useful.

Andrew Julius Bende
Daily Leader/Daglig Leder
Civil Connections

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COMMUNITY IMPACT PROJECTS MODEL (CIPM):

What is CIPM and CIPs?

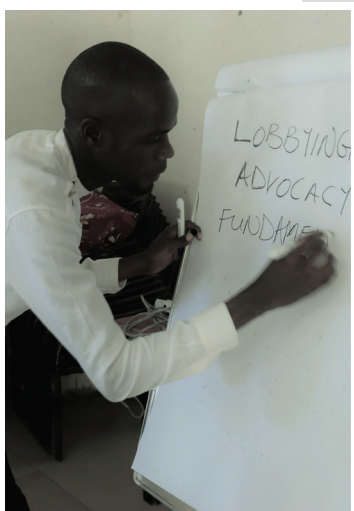
The Community Impact Project Model (CIPM) is defined by small-scale, low-cost interventions, that are planned and implemented within a short timeframe. These interventions also carry a strong element of being context resources and knowledge-based, as a prerequisite/boost to localization, domestication, ownership building, and higher probability of sustainability.

Community Impact Projects (CIPs) typically respond to the immediate needs of local communities. Such interventions cover a wide range of activities that directly answer to how the community itself conceives ways that they can improve their conditions or increase their possibilities. CIPs are primarily implemented by local actors including private activists, non-government organizations, community based (grassroots) organisations, and grassroots social enterprises. These projects help build local capacities, confidence, and agency.

Purpose of the CIPM:

Within our framework, CIPs are designed for mainly four specific purposes:

- I. To bring quick tangible results/gains with impact to a local community that is under distress/or struggling with a specific reachable need.
- II. To build confidence in the local communities we work with, to believe in their efforts, capacities, and agency to innovate initiatives that improve their local conditions.
- III. To pilot or try out ideas in uncharted contexts at manageable costs where in a way these projects act as a laboratory/building blocks for future bigger interventions.
- IV. To enable start-ups that we partner with to gain access to start-up capital for their ideas before formalizing into fully fledged organizations.



Main features of CIPM:

- I. Simple, small-scale, low-cost, and rapid to implement.
- II. Support and be part of overall organizational or local development strategy.
- III. Definite timeframe: preferably six months per phase, and then an evaluation and definition are required.
- IV. Respond to the basic priority needs expressed by beneficiary communities.
- V. Require community participation in identification, design, implementation, and follow-up/monitoring.
- VI. Are of relevance to/benefit the entire community and not just a small section.
- VII. Sustainable, easy to replicate and mainly depend on local context resources.
- VIII. Encourage a gender and age-focused approach.
- IX. Implemented through local partners rather than direct implementation.

Designing or deciding on CIPs:

The following information would be required for the design of CIPs:

- I. Identify the apparent needs and the priorities of the local community or group you intend to work with in the short and medium term.
- II. Gather information on ongoing related activities in the target community.
- III. Gather information on historical activities of the community (at least in a range of 10 years).
- IV. Identify other actors – civil society and private sector actors (formal and informal) in the area.
- V. Assess local demand and absorption capacities of the intended intervention goods and services.
- VI. Assess which of the goods and services are locally complimented or externally outsourced exported from the area.
- VII. Assess local market conditions of for both traders and consumers – e.g., access, disposable income, profitability, cost of living.
- VIII. Assess the long-term potential of the local community in economic terms (potential for growth, promising sectors etc.).
- IX. Assess economic development plans for the local community area (by national and local government, private sector actors, development organisations and donors).



If the data collected above shows medium to high potential of contributing to the betterment of the local community, then such a CIP can be evaluated as viable.

Elaborated approach to developing CIPs:

For elaboration of how the CIPM works and a blueprint (with space for modification) on how to develop CIPs, we are to a large extent influenced by the International Labour Organization's Local Economic Development (LED) model, which we see as a particularly useful model in our work, though with a few modifications based on the experiences we have gained in recent projects.

Just as ILO, LED model is a malleable and context-specific process that is difficult to concretely define stages to, our model also is not written in stone, but rather defines relevant processual/logical stages that facilitate projects or activities to gain effective grounding, stakeholder participation and ownership, based on local resources, a combination of which increases their success and or sustainability. Our model also takes into consideration our guiding principles defined earlier on and attempts to put these at the heart of the process.



The model involves five broad stages, which can then be broken into smaller tasks to cover each stage as will be defined later. The five stages include:

- I. Context analysis and understanding.
- II. Community mobilization and building of a local critical mass.
- III. Designing of a strategy.
- IV. Implementation of the strategy, and
- V. Evaluation and monitoring.

As ILO also notes, “these phases tend to be blurred and will feed into each other. For instance, problems in defining a strategy may lead to a return to the context analysis phase to gather further information that can inform the strategy formation process. Although the chronological order is thus not of crucial importance, projects that skip one or more of these phases are less likely to succeed”.

These phases are elaborated in the following sections, (see also ILO’s LED strategy, which lays as a steppingstone for ours).





PHASE 1: CONTEXT ANALYSIS:

To be able to devise a successful CIP that is locally anchored, and follows the earlier defined aspects of impact, actors - both local and external will first need to acquire an intimate knowledge of the local social, cultural, political, economic, and other relevant conditions of the community in question. This stage entails:

- I. Finding out as much as possible about the local context in relation to the intervention you have in mind, or in relation to identifying other ways you can interact with issues that a particular community is struggling with.
- II. This will mean for example, mapping out all stakeholders of the intended intervention and understanding their working dynamics, and how they feel about the problem at hand.
- III. Understanding power dynamics within the context, and what could facilitate or fail your project.
- IV. Understanding local context resources - what is locally available and what you need to bring in.
- V. Understanding decision making structures - both formal and informal that could determine the fate of your intervention.
- VI. And many more...
 - I. This information can be achieved in many ways, field presence, visits, credible informants, working with grounded local actors, reports, statistics, interview, appraisals etc. Just make sure the source is credible, representative, and updated.

The goal of the context analysis is to give stakeholders as complete as possible an overview of the:

- I. Local community life, dynamics, and ordering
- II. Local institutional and political environment
- III. Relevant legal and regulatory frameworks
- IV. Ongoing and planned development activities of local, regional, and national governments and other actors, such as international organizations and NGO's, that have an impact on the locality.
- V. Key statistical information



PHASE 2: COMMUNITY MOBILIZATION, CREATING A CORE INITIATIVE GROUP, AND BUILDING OF A LOCAL CRITICAL MASS.

The success of the CIPM or CIPs hugely depends on the participation of a wide range of local stakeholders in all phases of the project. Therefore, it is crucial to get as many critical local stakeholders as possible to be aware of and part of supporting the project/initiative and defining ways in which they are part of this.

Questions you want to ask yourself at this stage include for example:

- I. Which local stakeholders are present in the local community?
- II. Which stakeholders are closest to the problem we want to define and what is their role?
- III. What is the mandate or power of the different stakeholders generally and in relation to our initiative?
- IV. How do we make the different local stakeholders aware of our initiative?
- V. Which local stakeholders would you seek to include and how would you approach them?
- VI. How should/will the different local stakeholders be part of our initiative and how do make this clear to them so that it does not create confusion and conflicts?
- VII. Which resources could the different stakeholders bring to our initiative or take from it?
- VIII. And others found relevant...

In identifying the different stakeholders, one central aspect you need to think about is how these can facilitate the project to reach out to more people in the community so that you build a critical mass for the initiative's long-term uptake and sustainability. So, once you have completed mapping out of critical stakeholders, then you proceed to invite the most critical ones into a core project group, each bringing the identified advantages with them to the project. This core group will then act as your reference group on how you both implement the project, bring it out to more, resource it along the way, as well as ensuring that the initiative will be uptaken after the short period on funding and implementation.



PHASE 3: DESIGNING A CIP STRATEGY

Once you have defined a core stakeholder group above, it is now time to bring these together with the project team to develop a strategy or otherwise, what we want to achieve, and how we will achieve this. This will entail defining at least three aspects:

- I. Defining a local vision statement: The local stakeholders should define the local environment that they ultimately aim to create. Remember to be employ the SMART framework.
- II. Agreeing on concrete objectives: A set of more tangible, shorter term objectives need to be defined, along with a set of concrete outputs and measurable targets. Such outputs need to be defined in numbers or time frame so that it is easy to measure their progress along the way.
- III. Defining specific activities and tasks in logical order that will enable you to reach the different outputs. These tasks need to be defined in terms of who does what, so that all stakeholders know what their mandate in the project is.
- IV. Defining the different necessary inputs for the different three steps above towards creating a needed budget or resources needed.

Several tools and frameworks can be used to aid the formulation of concrete objectives and activities, but for a start we will recommend utilizing the SWOT matrix and LFA Matrix for their simplicity and concrete results.

PHASE 4: IMPLEMENTATION



As in ILO's LED programme, we also emphasize that local stakeholders are responsible for implementing CIPs. To be able to do this effectively, a clear implementation structure needs to be set out at the strategy stage above. And once the different tasks and resources have been defined and allocated/identified, then the core team and the project coordinator take on the role of ensuring that the different project components start being implemented.



PHASE 5: MONITORING AND EVALUATING

The final phase of any project be it a CIP or other types should always involve monitoring and evaluation. A combination of monitoring and evaluation brings together a step-by-step check up on a project progress for conformity to the earlier set plan and timely and final assessment of the project for its level of achievement towards the set impact.

Monitoring defined as an internal project activity designed to provide constant feedback on the progress of a project, the problems it is facing, and the efficiency with which it is being implemented. On an elaborate level monitoring encompasses the systematic collection, analysis and use of information from projects and programmes for three basic purposes, namely, learning from the experiences acquired (learning function); accounting internally and externally for the resources used and the results obtained (monitoring function); taking decisions (steering function). It is thus as a day-to-day check on progress against set targets.

On the other hand, evaluation denotes the assessment of progress after a defined period usually an end to an event, or at specifically defined intervals. Generally, an evaluation studies the outcome of a project, and assesses the extent to which the project produced the intended results.



OTHER IMPORTANT CONSIDERATIONS IN UTILIZING THE CIPS MODEL:

- CIPs being focused on the short-term and low investment, do not always translate into the longer-term requirements for sustainability. This of course depends on the context of the project.
- Remember always to accompany the CIPs with other frameworks that ensure that local communities and individuals are protected. This includes:
 - Our gender inclusivity analysis
 - Child protection guidelines
 - Civil Connections Code of conduct



EXAMPLES OF CIPS AT CIVIL CONNECTIONS

ICTS FOR EDUCATION IN UGANDA (SEPTEMBER 2020 – MARCH 2021)

Abstract:

This project was based on the background that while the country went on lock down in early April 2020, and along with this schools closed due to Covid-19, students and their families were only left with the options of government education programming on television, or to privately find means through which they keep their education/learning cycle continuous. This was particularly important for candidate classes i.e., Primary seven, Secondary four, Secondary six. These three classes would be facing National Examinations at the end of the year – exams (2020), which determine whether they continue to the next level, and to which school or University they take their further studies.

Resourced families have the possibility to pay for their children to gain private coaching. These families commonly have a TV set and thus access the government education programming. With the introduction of tariffs on social medias like Facebook and WhatsApp etc., resourced families and schools in general have the chance to deploy these as tools in their delivery of teaching to their students. But this does not necessarily apply to low resourced families. This made the competition uneven ahead of the annual exams. It was more difficult for rural students who on top of mostly likely falling in the low resourced category, also commonly have less access to electricity, internet connectivity, and fully equipped institutions and teachers to deliver alternative education modalities. These students make up at least 50% of the total population of candidates for these exams.

Luckily as the statistics also show, over 78% of Uganda households possess a smart phone – and or have access to phones. These phones in the absence of cheap data are still useful for phone calls, SMS, “beeping” or otherwise the technic of buzzing someone to let them know that they



need you to call them. These phones while waiting for data to become cheap, and for the government to scrap tariffs that make social media presence impossible for low resourced households, and while we waited for Covid-19 to subside, we thought could be the next way of accessing the teacher (classroom) at least for a few hours a day, for particularly pressed classes.

The project thus set out these objectives:

Generally, to contribute to approaches for maintaining the education of young people in low resourced communities against the odds of the proliferation of high-cost online learning utilization, by finding cheaper accessible alternatives.

Specifically, the project entailed:

- Implementing and utilizing a toll-free distributed telephone line to connect participating primary schools in Yumbe town council with Community Extension Teachers (CETs) to simultaneously provide home school education amidst, and into the post COVID 19.
- Compiling and distributing copies of “Pass Primary Leaving Exams questions” pamphlet to the participating schools, that will guide the students, CETs, and parents at home with a continued familiarity with the upcoming structure of the exams and reading practice.
- Mobilizing and guiding other stakeholders especially parents on their roles and responsibilities to enable continued learning within homes both during and after Covid-19 as a way of supporting their children towards succeeding at these exams, and their education at large.

This project model once tested and found to fit the local context – resource mix, could become a major part of the future of extra quality teaching support/complementarity to low resourced, low-accessed students, country wide and maybe also in other countries on the continent.



The connected CIPM objectives:

The project measures up as a CIP based on two criteria, namely:

1. To bring quick tangible results/gains with impact to a local community that is under distress/or struggling with a specific reachable need.
2. To pilot or try out ideas in uncharted contexts at manageable costs where in a way these projects act as a laboratory/building blocks for future bigger interventions.

**...placed
teachers at
the heart of
the entire
community**

Results so far:

- I. Although it took time to setup distributed telephony technology/system due to unforeseen lockdowns, this went on to be successfully implemented, and found to work effectively. Our technology pilot worked.
- II. While the local project group waited for the technology implementation, they started trying out with normal smartphones for distributed telephony, and here they discovered that these were equally capable of utilization. This means that one does not need to wait for the heavy tech implementations, it is possible to distribute the project based on already existing smartphones.
- III. With the delay in agreements with community radios to air the live classes, we recorded these on phones, and distributed the files by transfer to teachers in different locations where they connected phones to speakers and held classes and discussions. This revealed a great adjustment to the

project and utilization of already existing resources.

- IV. While we targeted one (1) subcounty at the start, we found ourselves in five (5) by mid project due to the extendibility of the technology and the rising demand from local stakeholders. It was our internal decision to stop at 5 due to coordination rigor, otherwise this could have easily risen higher.
- V. While we targeted 104 students, we ended up with 218 registered by exam time (February 2021), but with many more teachers, schools and students listening in and using the teachings/recordings without registering with us.
- VI. As it commonly applies to all projects, and due to the technology being unthinkable stakeholders delayed joining the project. So, we utilized a long time to mobilize a critical mass. But when we gained these and they found out that the technology worked, they became the local owners and ambassadors for the project. This was a real test and approval of the need to pay attention to the CIPM process.
- VII. Due to the demand, the teachers on the project worked double shifts, and in many cases volunteering their time on phone with parents and students for extra clarifications, coaching and ensuring that the students understood what they were being taught. The project suddenly placed teachers at the heart of the entire community mobilization and sustaining of the project, as opposed to only being school class figures.



MAYUGE RISE YOUTH SOCCER LEAGUE (FEBRUARY 2021 – JUNE 2021):

Abstract:

This is a 5-month weekend football event comprising of eight (8) youth soccer teams. It is being implemented in the Eastern Uganda district of Mayuge, with the idea that we will multiply this to more districts and other interested partner countries with time.

- The league has set out five immediate objectives including:
- To provide a set of accessible leisure sport activities for youths during their free time.
- To draw young people away from distractive behavior towards a more engaging and positively rewarding peer-based alternative.
- To promote the talents of young people within the sports field.
- To provide space for coming together, building common linkages and networking.
- The league also acts as a mobilization space for talking about community development and issues youths face.



The connected CIPM objectives:

After close to one year of lock-down, massive loss of jobs in Uganda where the peri-urban young people have been most hit, loss of income, rising conflicts, and going through one of the most clash-filled election in the country, young people reached out to Civil Connections for possibilities on how to engage the young people more productively. So, the league has foundation in creating a space for mobilizing and supporting young people through this distressed period. Along with running a life-skills program to support young people to redefine themselves/find new ground in the turbulent times.



Specifically, in perspective of the CIMP we aim to:

1. To bring quick tangible results/gains with impact to a local community that is under distress/or struggling with a specific reachable need.
2. To build confidence in the local communities we work with, to believe in their efforts, capacities, and agency to innovate initiatives that improve their local conditions.
3. To pilot or try out ideas in uncharted contexts at manageable costs where in a way these projects act as a laboratory/building blocks for future bigger interventions.

Results so far:

After launching:

- The eight (8) youth soccer teams have been able to mobilize at least 30 players/members each.
- The league is thus home to 240 players plus at least 500 spectators on every weekend.
- This means the league is engaging at least 2800 youths and members of their communities per month.
- The coordinators are utilizing the gatherings to start a dialogue about community issues and how young people as a block can be part of the solution

CONCLUSION:

Thank you for your interest in our Community Impact Projects Model (CIPM), and the general concept of Community Impact Projects (CIPs). This is indeed what the sections you have hopefully covered have delved into, to give you a practical place to start with your journey of designing your own CIPs or whatever you will call them within your strategy.

This has been organized in two parts, namely:

Part 1: Presents the CIPM and CIPs in depth.

Part 2: Presents selected examples of CIPs at Civil Connections.

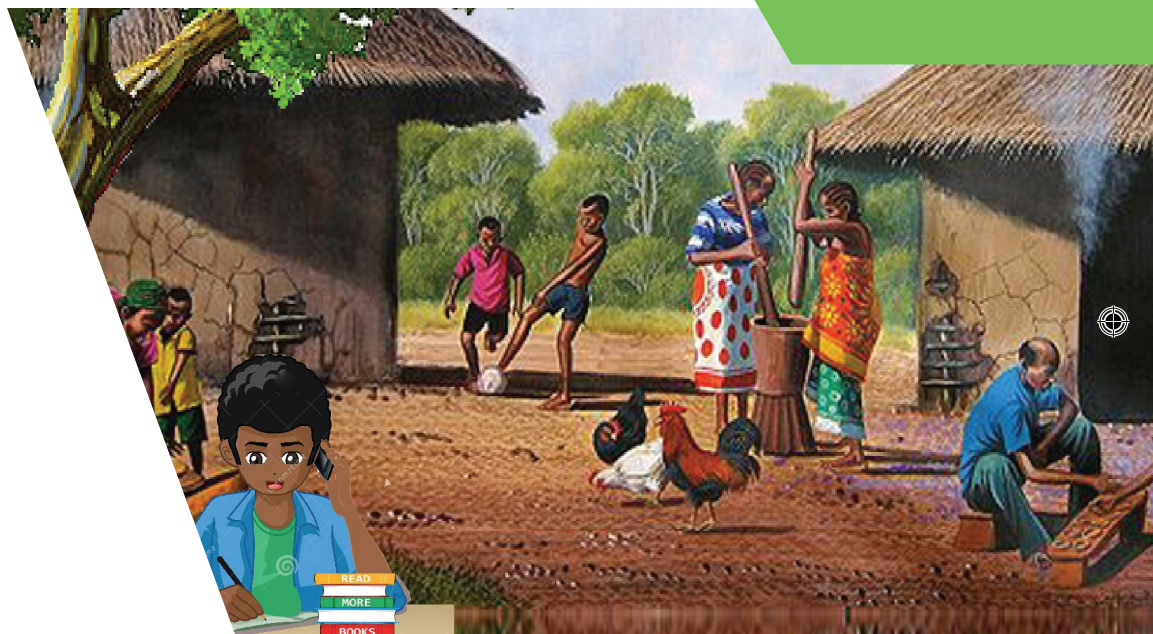
We hope you have found this guide useful, and that it motivates your future work with CIPs at whatever stage you find yourself.

Thank you.

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Civil Connections
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