



GOAL



LEARNING BRIEF

PROGRAMME ADAPTATION & EXPANSION DURING GLOBAL CRISES

LESSONS LEARNED FROM GOAL IRISH AID PROGRAMMING FUNDING 2019-2022

DATE

October 2023

THEME(S)

Emergency
Preparedness;
Emergency Response;
Health; Food & Nutrition
Security; Resilience; SBC;
WASH

LOCATION

Global

DONOR

Irish Aid

INTERVENTION DATE(S)

2019 - 2022

COST(S)

€43 million

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

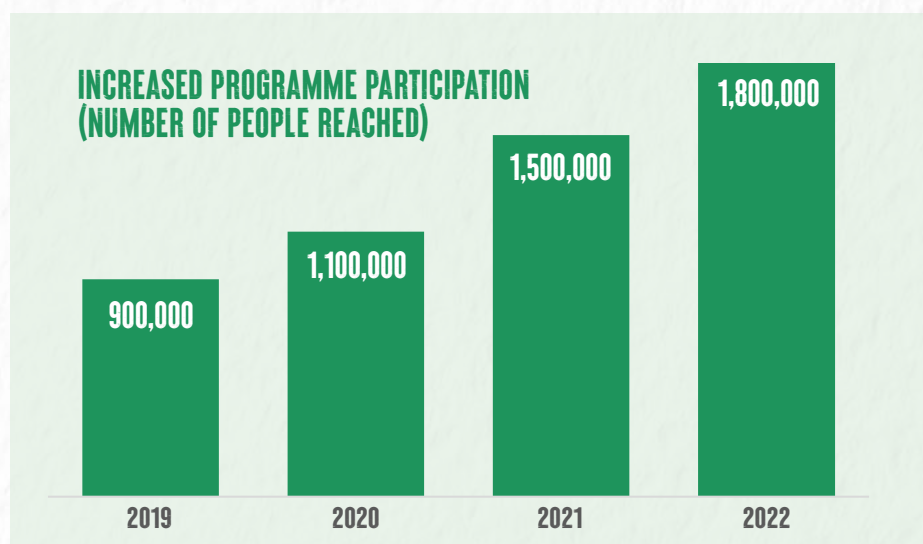
From 2019-2022, through its dynamic partnership with Irish Aid, GOAL worked effectively and efficiently to deliver humanitarian and development interventions in the midst of various global challenges. These included a global pandemic, a brutal conflict on Europe's doorstep, and an inflationary spiral all of which drove upheaval and hardship across the Global South placing more strain on vulnerable health, social, and economic systems in many countries around the world.

This Learning Brief outlines lessons learned from GOAL's experience in expanding and adapting existing programmes during crises, and implementing innovative approaches during this period. GOAL's partnership with Irish Aid provided a strong, flexible, and sustained framework to achieving our programme objectives, which also supported the Government of Ireland's commitments set out in 'A Better World: Ireland's policy for International Development' (2019-2025).

BACKGROUND

With funding through the Irish Aid Programme Fund (IAPF) between 2019 and 2022, GOAL delivered assistance across ten fragile and conflict affected countries: Ethiopia, Haiti, Iraq, Malawi, Niger, Sierra Leone, South Sudan, Sudan, Uganda, and Zimbabwe. GOAL increased programme participation year on year to almost two million vulnerable people reached in 2022. The partnership with Irish Aid supported GOAL to further mature its approach to providing humanitarian assistance while working within systems to effect change that benefits people facing crisis, poverty, and exclusion. Specifically, by building the resilience of local communities, government ministries, civil society and local businesses, GOAL helped to strengthen local governance and reduce humanitarian need, so that communities are better able to cope with and recover from disasters and emergencies.

The continuous rigorous analysis, insights, and learnings gained from the implementation of IAPF over the years also greatly contributed to the development of GOAL's new comprehensive Crisis to Resilience framework, which is the foundation of GOAL's Strategy 2025.



LEARNINGS

Critical learnings from GOAL's IAPF were identified for each of the primary objectives - aligned to GOAL's 2019-2021 Strategy: Alliance, Ambition, Action. A selection of these learnings are as follows:

1. PEOPLE SURVIVE CRISES

Early Warning and Response Systems

GOAL supported the direct engagement of local communities in disaster risk management. For example, through the establishment, training, and equipping of Civil Protection Committees and Early Warning and Response Committees in Malawi, Niger, and Zimbabwe. These groups provided an opportunity for communities to participate in local decision-making structures and processes, inform disaster risk reduction plans and participate in community training and action. Local communities, through these groups, also helped to design appropriate tools for communicating early warning information.

- This led to community members feeling better prepared and more knowledgeable in how their communities manage disaster risk with increases in the number of people reporting their community was well prepared to respond and recover to disasters; and who considered they have timely access to clear and relevant information.

In Sierra Leone, GOAL supported the National Disaster Management and Response Agency in the development of a flooding and fire disaster management tool that can quickly identify affected people and target vulnerable communities in the event of any flooding or fire disasters.

- The digitalisation of this tool provided more timely collation and processing of data, with key government representatives reporting that they feel more confident in identifying and promoting adequate risk reduction and preparedness measures.

Community-Led Action for Disease Outbreak Response

Using learning from its West Africa Ebola response in 2014, GOAL published a guidance manual on implementing Community Led Action (CLA) titled Community Led Action for COVID: A Field Manual for Community Mobilisers. With additional support from Irish Aid's Emergency Response Fund Scheme (ERFS), a multi-country CLA for COVID response was implemented in Honduras, Iraq, Niger, and Uganda.

- The rapid, evidenced outcomes from this approach enabled GOAL to secure further significant funding from other institutional donors to implement CLA in Ethiopia, Sierra Leone, and Zimbabwe.

In Sierra Leone, GOAL co-chaired and seconded staff to the Risk Communication and Mobilisation pillar of the National COVID Emergency Response Centre, supporting it to develop a national training manual.

- The Ministry of Health in Sierra Leone adopted the CLA approach to encourage COVID vaccination uptake, helping the country reach the World Health Organisation's benchmark of 70% of the eligible population being vaccinated by December 2022.
- Although the national manual was developed in response to the COVID pandemic, it was subsequently used to respond quickly to the risk posed by disease outbreaks in neighbouring Guinea as part of a national preparedness response to outbreaks of the Ebola and Marburg viruses.



2. PEOPLE HAVE RESILIENT HEALTH

Social and Behaviour Change

Within IAPF, GOAL adapted and implemented community and peer-to-peer Social Behaviour Change (SBC) interventions. Examples include:

- In Ethiopia, GOAL supported initiatives to engage community members through implementation of the Family Health Approach including reproductive health promotion, school health clubs, and local health committees. This led to increases in the capacity of individuals, families, and communities to care for their own wellbeing. A specific example within the Family Health Approach was to promote the role and responsibilities of men in changing existing norms and values.
- In Sierra Leone, female adolescents and youth using a modern method of contraception increased due to training and on-the-job mentoring of health care workers on provision of adolescent and youth-friendly services.
- In Uganda, a Maternal, New-born, Child Health and Nutrition (MNCHN) project achieved positive changes in nutritional practices and health-seeking behaviour and improved quality and delivery of health care services. There was also an increase in the targeted communities' abilities to demand and hold their service providers accountable for delivery of quality MNCHN services.

Maintenance of Community Water Points

In Uganda, GOAL had been piloting new approaches to operationalise and maintain rural water supplies since 2015. Earlier pilots implementing an insurance type model failed largely because water user committees were unable to collect and save a monthly user fee to pay the quarterly charge – even though they were happy with the service. As a result, GOAL piloted a pre-payment system for handpumps. Handpumps were fitted with a smart device to measure the volume of water discharged which then charge the customer the appropriate amount by removing credit from their token card. The success of this approach in maintaining community water pumps is also attributable to GOAL's engagement with local government officials within the districts and regional structures of the national Ministry of Water and Environment in designing and monitoring the approach.

- All water-points with these pre-payment devices continue to provide safe, accessible water at an affordable rate to households in these pilot communities.
- However, the pilot highlighted that the design and set-up costs of the smart pre-payment meter meant that scaling-up use of the technology was not yet feasible.

3. PEOPLE HAVE FOOD AND NUTRITION SECURITY

Scaling-up the Nutrition Impact and Positive Practice approach

GOAL's Nutrition Impact and Positive Practice (NIPP) approach is a gendered, grass-roots approach that directly tackles a range of underlying behavioural causes of malnutrition. The IAPF programme provided the opportunity for NIPP to be scaled in Niger, Sudan, Uganda, and Zimbabwe, contributing to wider positive health outcomes.

- GOAL's global NIPP data repository demonstrates high cure rates of moderate acute malnutrition (MAM) among children aged 6-59 months, and pregnant and lactating women; as well as sustained positive practices contributing to other improved health, livelihoods, and hygiene-sanitation outcomes.

Adoption of Climate and Nutrition Smart Agricultural Practices

Over the duration of the IAPF, GOAL integrated methods for climate and nutrition-smart practices into programmes. Communities were supported to access climate-adapted, nutritionally improved seeds that address specific nutrient gaps, in consort with vegetable production through kitchen gardening to enhance access to improved diversified diets.

- In Niger, vulnerable households participating in 'cash for work' operations, made zai holes in their own fields. These holes - which are mini water reservoirs and compost piles - improve natural recovery of soil degraded by wind erosion, but also increase the agricultural production in fields, especially when growing crops for animal fodder. The latter of which was directly reported by all households leading to greater food availability throughout the year.

- In Zimbabwe, a lead farmer model was implemented for GOAL to effectively train a small number of community farmers who then cascaded the training and knowledge to a greater number of farmers within their community. There was an overwhelming turnout to trainings due to ignited interest by other farmers from the same and neighbouring communities, and additional farmer to farmer interactions outside of the training sessions conducted. Interestingly, female farmers reported less crop and livestock production increases than male farmers in the same communities. This could be attributed to males and females having different perceptions of climate vulnerabilities, such as risk and the effects of drought on agricultural production; or different abilities to adapt to these challenges - suggesting a more gendered approach may be required with the lead farmer model.

4. PEOPLE HAVE SUSTAINABLE LIVELIHOODS

Establishment and capacity-strengthening of Village Saving and Loan Associations

Across GOAL's IAPF programme, the establishment, training, and capacity-strengthening of Village Saving and Loan Associations (VSLAs) was integral to the achievement of impact in GOAL's efforts to promote resilient health, nutrition and food security and sustainable livelihoods. VSLAs are self-managed member-groups that meet on a regular basis to collectively save money and provide access to credit. In contexts where there is an absence of formal financial service providers, VSLAs can be a critical steppingstone towards financial inclusion, building financial and digital skills and confidence, especially for harder-to-reach groups such as women and youth.

- Members of VSLA groups established by GOAL attested to how, in addition to providing access to savings and credit, the groups foster greater social cohesion amongst members.

Access to agricultural and livestock skills, goods, and services

There were a range of interventions applied across different country offices to increase access to agricultural and livestock skills, goods, and services leading to more sustainable livelihoods. In Zimbabwe, the para-vet model was particularly successful. Para-vets are community members trained in livestock husbandry practices, health and nutrition; the use of veterinary kits; fodder production; and agro-dealership. In addition, private sector partners were engaged to provide training on use of inputs, as well as access to financial services and products that are essential for market system engagement.

- Para-vets were assessed to have improved disease surveillance abilities, diagnosis and treatment skills and practices, which resulted in low morbidity and mortality rates for livestock.
- The frequency and timing of training and learning events was important. For example, practical demonstrations on commercial feeds and supplementary feeding were conducted during feeder finance scheme initiatives to reach more farmers. Para-vets also needed refresher courses and further advanced courses to continually improve livestock nutrition. They attended drought preparedness and mitigation trainings so as to strengthen their skills and knowledge on crops, livestock, and other livelihoods initiatives given the COVID pandemic had affected their day-to-day operations.



5. GLOBAL CITIZENSHIP & PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

Despite COVID restrictions during a significant proportion of the IAPF period that limited engagement in public events and school visits, GOAL delivered a valuable, innovative programme of participative engagement, connecting young people in Ireland with those in the Global South. This allowed for a true exchange of experiences and the cultivation of solidarity with the communities that GOAL supports.

- The NextGen youth network grew in membership in part due to establishing engaging social media accounts, regular meetings, co-creation of youth-led global citizenship education resources to support the wider programme's public engagement.
- Creative partnerships with Irish artists and musicians proved impactful, allowing GOAL NextGen to reach new and wider audiences. Using the arts enabled young people to amplify their messaging of collective action with the public.
- GOAL's Global Citizenship Education (GCE) programme pivoted to an online environment due to COVID. The development of a deepened engagement strategy and whole of school approach allowed for more strategic engagement with a diverse range of schools embedding GOAL resources and GCE messaging.
- GOAL's GCE consultant facilitator model was particularly successful in achieving the deepened engagement strategy and 'whole of school' approach in which multiple classes across all years within the same primary school are engaged with GOAL GCE workshops, also receiving repeat visits on a range of resources, and encouraged to engage in Changemakers action projects.
- Another key success of the programme was GCE resource co-creation in partnership with GOAL country programme teams, which included for example, the 'Water Wishes' resource co-created with GOAL Honduras. This approach amplified the voices of people in the Global South, building greater knowledge and understanding of global development based on lived experiences.

CROSS CUTTING APPROACHES

GOAL's IAPF programme of work enables the agency to integrate approaches within the same communities, meaning people's diverse needs and priorities are considered in programme design, rather than in siloed, sector-driven programming.

- Throughout the IAPF programme, issues of gender equality and social inclusion (GESI) in humanitarian and development interventions were addressed. GOAL was able to develop a consistent, integrated, targeted, and equitable approach to implementation planning, design, and delivery due to a number of innovations. This included the establishment of a GESI Focal Point Network with representation from all countries; Global GESI annual Action Plans; the roll out of the Washington Group - Short Set (WG-SS) questions on functioning in its MEAL activities to drive disability disaggregation in its data collection; and collaboration with local bodies, representative groups and organisations.
- Community-led approaches were effective for accessing hard-to-reach communities, building trust and acceptance with those communities, and promoting their ownership and leadership of development initiatives. These approaches helped improve access to physical inputs, information and services, as well as strengthening the knowledge and capacity of vulnerable communities.
- Throughout the IAPF period, GOAL further developed tools that helped the organisation take a system strengthening approach to its programming. These include the Resilience for Social Systems (R4S) Approach, the Analysis of the Resilience of Communities to Disasters (ARC-D) Toolkit, and the Programme Context Analysis and Design (PCAD). Implementation of the R4S Approach and/or the ARC-D Toolkit allowed country programmes and target populations to prepare for and respond better to identified risk scenarios, including extreme weather events and climate change. Additionally, GOAL's Health Facility Assessment Tool takes a holistic approach to health system strengthening, focusing on provisioning and equipment, pharmacy management, hygiene and sanitation, and facility governance, as well as health service delivery.
- Throughout the programme of work, GOAL developed appropriate and effective partnerships with public sector, private sector, and civil society partners. GOAL's capacity development work and methods of partnership were tailored to both the local context and the capacity needs of partner organisations and included joint monitoring and supervision of programme initiatives and the co-learning of best practice.

- GOAL's strong commitment to safe, accountable, and inclusive programming (SAIP) to affected populations is evidenced in part through the Community Feedback Mechanism (CFM). A critical component of GOAL's operations, the CFM has expanded and gained further credibility, not only among staff, but more importantly among programme participants and the communities GOAL works with. Such a strong level of uptake is due to several factors, including high levels of organisational investment and contextualisation of feedback approaches to local contexts and community priorities, transparency and two-way dialogue, as well as the prioritisation of responding to complaints in a timely manner.
- GOAL mainstreamed sustainability within its programmes by focusing on strong contextual analyses in programme locations that identified and developed the capacity of strategic, local, long-term stakeholders, with the subsequent humanitarian action designed around achieving impacts that can be sustained beyond the lifetime of the interventions. This has helped to recognise best practice and ensure local leadership and ownership of initiatives.

RECOMMENDATIONS

As GOAL met and exceeded key targets of the IAPF programme, many valuable insights were learned, which will be applied to future work. Irish Aid's support to GOAL will continue to effect positive change beyond the people and communities we work with directly. Recommendations from these lessons learned include:

- When designing and implementing programmes, understanding local systems, partnering with organisations that have complementary knowledge and expertise, and integrating approaches across health, food, agriculture, and livelihoods is important for addressing the multiple needs of communities and having greater impact.
- Investing in local relationships with public sector, private sector and civil society organisations as well as local communities helps to build mutual trust, promote local ownership and leadership of programmes, reach those people most in need and ensure that the impacts of programmes are sustainable.
- Investing in designing and testing new, innovative approaches and ideas is important for finding more effective ways to address the ever-changing and increasingly severe shocks and hazards faced by the world's poorest and most vulnerable people.
- Having the IAPF funding modality not tied to either humanitarian or development modalities helped GOAL to adapt its responses to rapidly changing contexts and humanitarian needs of communities.
- Flexible funding allows GOAL to adapt our projects to rapidly changing contexts and community needs – vital for saving lives and helping people become more resilient.

REFERENCES

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- 'GOAL Strategy 2025: From Crisis to Resilience', GOAL Global (<https://www.goalglobal.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/GOAL-Strategy-2025-WEB.pdf>)
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