



Development Learning Lab

ANNUAL REPORT 2021

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About Development Learning Lab

The Development Learning Lab (DLL) is a research and learning centre that works with development practitioners to enhance learning and improve outcomes of development programmes.

DLL partners with NGOs, multilateral organisations, and governments to provide evidence and do research at all stages of development projects and programmes.

Our contribution is to make research-based knowledge more accessible, fill knowledge gaps about what works and why, and provide a systematic approach to learning from research and experience – within and across organisations.

The Development Learning Lab was established in 2021 as a collaboration between the Chr. Michelsen Institute (CMI), the University of Bergen (UiB), the Norwegian School of Economics (NHH) and its Centre for Applied Research (SNF).

DLL originates from a long-standing collaboration between CMI and two Centres of Excellence at UiB and NHH: the Centre for Experimental Research on Fairness, Inequality and Rationality (FAIR) and the Centre for Intervention Science in Maternal and Child Health (CISMAC). At the UiB, the Centre is part of the Global Challenges priority area.

DLL is physically located at CMI's premises in Bergen.



More Learning
Better Outcomes



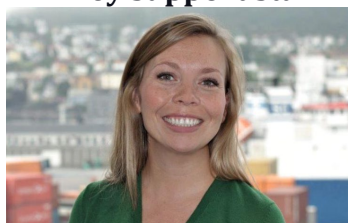
Management and support

DLL Management Team



In 2021, the DLL management team consisted of (from left) Ingvild Fossgard Sandøy (UiB), Kjetil Bjorvatn (NHH/SNF), Espen Villanger (CMI) and Hilde Selbervik (CMI).

DLL key support staff



Pernille Jørgensen
Senior Graphic Designer
CMI



Robert Sjursen
Senior IT adviser
CMI



Pauline Lemaire
PhD Researcher
UIB/CMI



The DLL partnership established

After several years of planning, the Development Learning Lab was formally established on 2 September 2021.

The partner agreement between CMI, UiB, NHH and SNF was signed by Rector Margareth Hagen (UiB), Rector Øystein Thøgersen (NHH), Director Svenn-Åge Dahl (SNF), and Director Ottar Mæstad (CMI).





Development Learning Lab Launch Event



DLL was officially launched in Bergen University Aula on 2 September 2021.

Representatives from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Norad, civil society organizations and research institutions were invited to discuss: **How can better learning improve the results of development cooperation?**

Due to the Covid-situation, the number of seats in the Aula were restricted, but we managed to pull the event off with 74 participants physically present and 151 participants following the event digitally.



The event was a great success, with excellent speakers and good discussions. Highlights include: Opening address by the **Minister of International Development, Dag Inge Ulstein**, who wholeheartedly supported the DLL initiative; a keynote speech by **Stefan Dercon**, Special Adviser to the FCDO and professor at Oxford University, who elaborated in an excellent way on the importance and challenges of making politicians, implementers and researchers work together to build and utilize research-based knowledge; snapshots from **four DLL projects**; and a **panel discussion** on what the statement “Fakta har makta” means for practice, featuring representatives from funders, implementers and researchers.

PROGRAMME DLL LAUNCH EVENT

WELCOME. Ottar Mæstad, Director CMI

THE DEVELOPMENT LEARNING LAB EXPLAINED. Espen Villanger, Director DLL

KNOWLEDGE FOR DEVELOPMENT. Dag Inge Ulstein, Minister of International Development

LEARNING FROM RESEARCH-BASED KNOWLEDGE: HOW CAN DLL MAKE A DIFFERENCE? Keynote by Stefan Dercon, FCDO/UK government and Professor at Oxford University.

SNAPSHOTS FROM DLL PROJECTS:

- Childcare for business development. Kjetil Bjorvatn, NHH
- Female genital mutilation: Pathways to change. Charlotte Ringdal, CMI
- Poverty and financial services: Is there a role for traditional leaders? Peter Hangoma, UiB/CMI
- Empowering girls: Effects on childbearing and education. Ingvild Fossgard Sandøy, UiB

Panel discussion: "FAKTA HAR MAKTA": WHAT DOES IT MEAN FOR PRACTICE?

- Håvard Mogleiv Nygård, Director of Knowledge and Evaluations at Norad
- Nora Ingdal, International Programs Director, Save the Children
- Titus Tenga, Program Director, Strømme Foundation
- Thomas Odegard, Executive Director, Development Fund
- Chair: Andrew Krog Lund

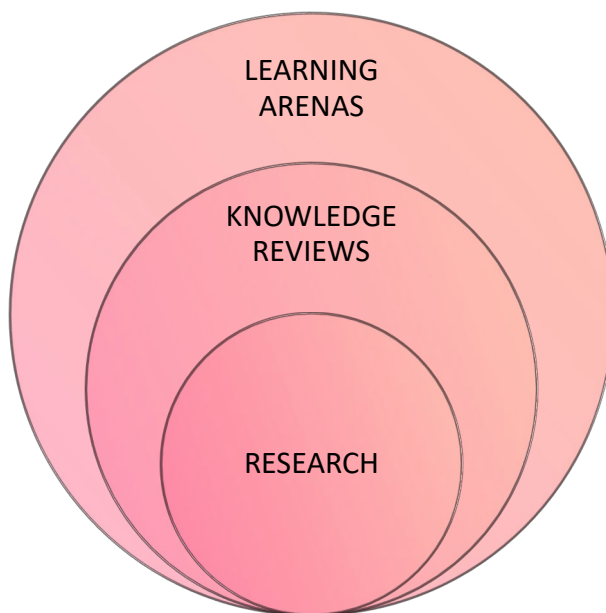
CONCLUDING REMARKS

Margareth Hagen, Rector UiB, Øystein Thøgersen, Rector NHH and Ottar Mæstad, Director CMI

The leaders of the DLL partner institutions concluded by stating that DLL is an important milestone for intervention research in Bergen, and a platform for collaboration both locally, nationally, and internationally.



DLL activities and resources



The core elements of DLL are

Research

Impact evaluation of development interventions to understand what works, why, and for whom.

Knowledge reviews

Reviews of existing research to make research findings accessible for practical use.

Learning Arenas

Physical and digital venues that bring together researchers, policymakers, and practitioners in thematic Learning Arenas to share knowledge and experience.



Research

DLL conducts rigorous research alongside the implementation of development programmes to understand what works, why, and for whom.

We develop research questions together with our partners and establish rapid feedback loops to enable learning along the way.

Ongoing projects

Interventions against female genital mutilation and child marriage in Ethiopia



The project assesses the impacts of an intervention to reduce female genital mutilation and child marriage. The intervention aims to change norms, attitudes and behavior through a range of activities including awareness raising, community mobilization, training, capacity building of institutions, and support at the policy/government level.

The policy question is whether such a comprehensive approach to reducing FGM and child marriage affects parents' intentions to cut their daughters/marry them early, and whether it affects FGM and child marriage incidence.

We measure effects on norms, attitudes, and beliefs about others' attitudes and intentions to cut and marry their daughters. We also measure the effects on the incidence of FGM as well as on the age at marriage. We follow the implementation process and provide regular

Implementing partners

Norwegian Church Aid and Save the Children, Norway

Study population

3,100 parents, 12,000 children

Type of study

Controlled before after study +
Randomized controlled trial

Timeline

2020-2025

DLL fellows involved

Espen Villanger, Charlotte Ringdal, Monica Beeder



feedbacks to implementers with qualitative and quantitative data collection and analysis during the implementation phase.

Funding from the Research Council of Norway has been secured for an RCT on an additional component of the programme. This part is yet to be implemented.

Effects of multi-sectoral rehabilitation and reconstruction on living conditions



We evaluate the impact of three program interventions on people's living conditions in three provinces in south-east Liberia: i) the agricultural program includes input distribution, seeds, and planting methods and aims to increase household incomes and food security, ii) the water, sanitation and hygiene program includes the installation of hand pumps, latrines, and hygiene education and aims to increase health outcomes, and iii) the women's empowerment intervention includes women's rights awareness campaigns and the establishment of support networks with the aim to strengthen women's rights and decrease violence against women.

The policy question is whether interventions in agriculture, WASH, and women's empowerment improve living conditions in post-conflict contexts. If so, through which mechanisms?

We measure income, food security, food diversity, water-borne diseases, violence against women and gender attitudes.

Implementing partners

Welthungerhilfe, Oxfam, Medica Liberia

Study population

121 communities, 8,000 respondents

Type of study

Randomized controlled trial

Timeline

2018 - 2022

DLL fellows involved

Carlo Koos



Can zinc increase survival of young infants receiving antibiotic treatment?



Despite the existence of effective antibiotics, serious infections are among the most common causes of death among babies in the first two months of life. Previous research has found that daily zinc intake can increase the success of antibiotic treatment among infants.

The policy question is whether daily zinc should be added to the treatment of young infants with clinical severe infection in order to increase survival.

We estimate the risk of dying among babies younger than two months who received daily zinc in addition to antibiotics for severe infection compared to babies who received antibiotics.

In-country research partners

Translational Health Science and Technology Institute (India) and Tribhuvan University (Nepal)

Study population

3,000 infants in seven hospitals

Type of study

Randomized controlled trial

Timeline

2017-2022

DLL fellows involved

Halvor Sommerfelt, Tor Strand



Water and Social Cohesion in Refugee Settings



Water and sanitation (WASH) are often scarce in refugee settings. WASH projects are implemented across the globe in an attempt to alleviate water-borne diseases, improve health and livelihoods as well as foster sustainable development. WASH projects therefore have marked impacts on local communities' social fabrics and are a plausible driver of social cohesion and peace. Whether and, if so, by what mechanism this link comes about, however, has received all-too little scrutiny in the academic and policy literature.

The policy question is whether water and sanitation interventions can reduce scarcity-related resource competition and contribute to social cohesion within and between refugee and host populations.

This evaluation relies on the design for a six-year cumulative study on the effects of WASH on social cohesion. A key innovation of the project is to bridge quantitative difference-in-differences models with fine-grained qualitative evidence in a Bayesian framework. We measure social trust and prosocial behavior

Implementing partners

UNICEF, UNHCR, KfW

Study population

6,000 respondents in 6 refugee camps

Type of study

Randomized controlled trial

Timeline

2022 - 2026

DLL fellows involved

Carlo Koos



Information campaigns for improved state-society and intergroup relations in fragile states



Beneficiaries of foreign aid interventions often lack basic information on development projects in their communities. Lack of credible information can increase the risk that misinformation and rumors nurture perceptions of unfair and clientelist aid distribution. This, in turn, can have adverse consequences on inter-group and state-society relations.

Implementing partners

KfW

Study population

10,000 respondents

Type of study

Randomized controlled trial

Timeline

2021 - 2023

DLL fellows involved

Carlo Koos, Paul Hofman

This project investigates if targeted aid information campaigns can improve state-society relations and intergroup relations.

Our analyses rely on a randomized controlled trial among 10,000 respondents in 200 villages of Mali and Niger. Members of the treatment group will receive customized information on ongoing aid projects in their community (e.g., type, volume, and formal rules of project selection). In the mid-line, we repeat this information. In addition, half of the treatment group will have the opportunity to provide anonymous feedback on the project to the government and responsible aid agency. In the end line, we estimate the effects of these interventions on people's local political engagement and social trust towards outgroups.

We measure state-society relations, Intergroup relations, political efficacy, and distributional fairness.



Incentives for tax compliance



The project studies whether incentives can be used to improve collection of value added taxes (VAT). VAT receipts are used as tickets in a lottery with monetary prizes. The idea is to motivate customers to ask for receipts and that this will lead to more receipts being issued. Increasing the issuance of VAT receipts will make more information about transactions available to the tax authority. This makes it easier for them to estimate and enforce taxes, and may therefore increase VAT revenues collected.

The policy question is whether positive incentives for customers in the form of a lottery can improve VAT revenue collection and affect business development.

We measure effects of the VAT receipt lottery on issuance of receipts, VAT revenues collected and business development using administrative and survey data.

Implementing partner
Tanzania Revenue Authority

Study population
4,900 businesses

Type of study
Synthetic control

Timeline
2019 - 2024

DLL fellows involved
Odd-Helge Fjeldstad, Ingrid
Hoem Sjursen, Vincent Somville



Projects in pipeline

Climate smart agriculture in Ethiopia and Malawi

The project will assess the impact of provision of climate services and training in how to transform such services into smart agricultural decisions. The study will target smallholder farmers with limited access to weather forecast and limited knowledge on how to use forecasts in their agricultural practices.

The policy question is how to increase smallholder farmers' resilience in the face of increasing weather variability and climate change.

The research will be implemented in cooperation with Norce and NMBU.

Implementing partners

Development Fund, Caritas

Type of study

Randomized controlled trial

DLL fellows involved

Jon Einar Flåtnes

Drip-kit irrigation in Malawi

This project will measure the impact of the provision of drip kit irrigation system to smallholder farmers.

The project was proposed by Norwegian Church Aid (NCA) as a candidate for funding through J-Pal Europe's mechanism for research on humanitarian interventions. DLL participated in a J-Pal workshop in Paris together with NCA and others to develop the concept. Alternative funding channels are currently being explored.

Implementing partner

Norwegian Church Aid

Type of study

Randomized controlled trial

DLL fellows involved

Hilde Selbervik



Early marriage in Nepal

DLL has been approached by Plan with the intention to document the results of some of their interventions to reduce child marriage in Nepal.

A pre-study has been proposed to ensure that the proposed interventions are well suited in the local context.

Decisions about next steps will be taken based on the results from the pre-study.

Implementing partner
Plan

Type of study
Randomized controlled trial

DLL fellows involved
Ingvild Fossgard Sandøy, Espen
Villanger, Peter Hangoma

Knowledge reviews



DLL knowledge reviews synthesize available research and extract lessons for practical use.

DLL offers systematic reviews of the effectiveness of development interventions. We also offer other literature reviews, including on the nature and causes of development challenges.

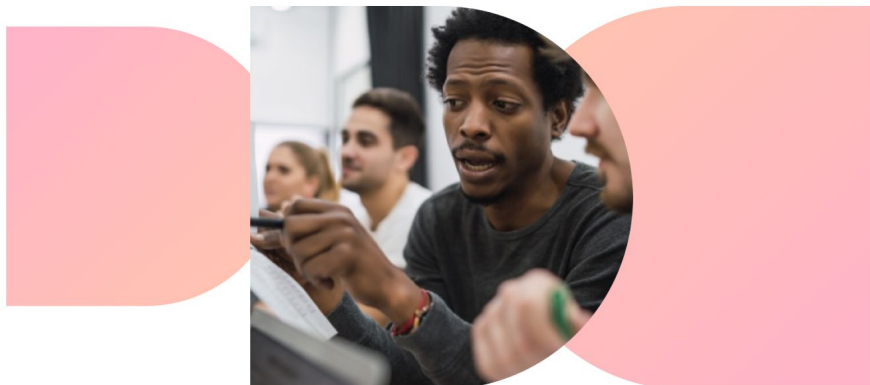
In 2021, DLL started a discussion with the **International Initiative for Impact Evaluation (3ie)** about a formal cooperation. The cooperation will enable DLL to implement larger systematic reviews and link DLL to the largest repository of knowledge reviews in the development field through the [3ie Development Evidence Portal](#).

We have initiated a work stream to develop a **template for DLL knowledge reviews**, aiming to strike a balance between the timeliness of rapid reviews and the comprehensiveness of traditional systematic reviews. We also aim to develop a concept of dynamic reviews that are updated on a regular basis. This work is conducted in cooperation with 3ie and is expected to be finished in 2022.

Two rapid knowledge reviews were produced in the initial phase of the project on female genital mutilation and child marriage with Norwegian Church Aid and Save the Children.



Learning Arenas



DLL Learning Arenas is a novel concept that is yet to be fully developed and implemented.

The idea is to provide digital and physical venues for learning, where policymakers, practitioner and researchers share knowledge and experience in a trusting atmosphere.

DLL's added value is to facilitate learning across organisations that work with the same development challenges.

In 2021, we organized a half day seminar with civil society organizations (Save the Children, Norwegian Church Aid, Digni, Strømmestiftelsen, and the Development Fund) to discuss

- How can your organization benefit from more formalized cooperation to enhance learning? What are the needs?
- What role can thematic learning arenas play, and how can they best be organized, and how can research feed into this?

DLL obtained funding from the CMI/UIB cooperation fund to start an innovation process to develop concepts and content of the DLL learning arenas. We will explore the demand for learning arenas in relevant organizations and explore how DLL learning arenas should be designed, involving experts on continued education at UiB and NHH. A DLL learning arena pilot will then be developed and tested on the target audiences

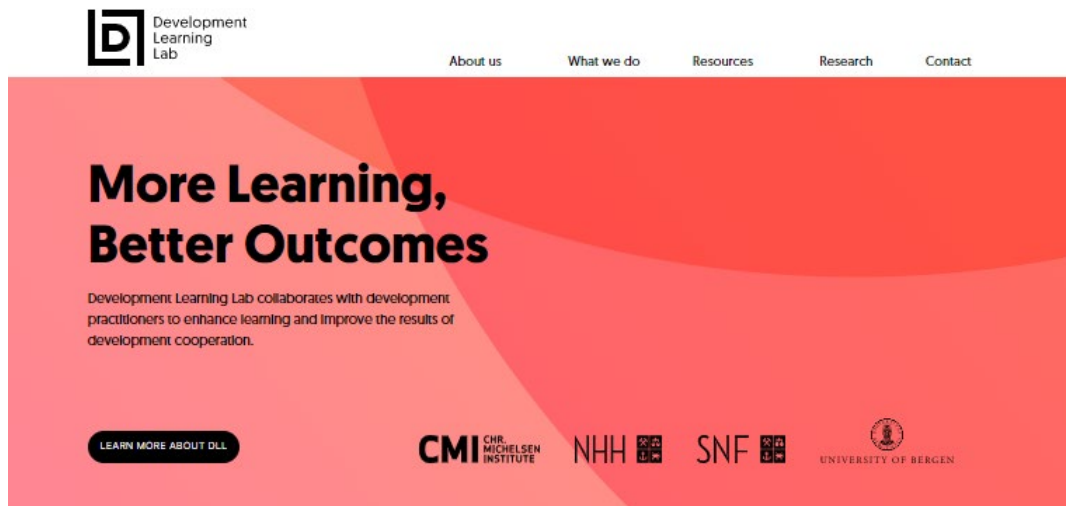
A potential long-term ambition is to develop a high-quality executive education program for people working with development aid.



DevLearnLab.no

A substantial effort was made to develop the DLL webpages. The CMI communication and IT units designed the key elements of the webpage. Inputs to the project pages were provided by all partner institutions.

The pages were officially launched in early 2022. We are happy with the result and aim to develop the pages into a user-friendly platform with relevant resources for policymakers and practitioners.



Development Learning Lab provides

Reliable knowledge about results – to improve learning and adaptation.

Access to relevant research – to develop more effective policies and programmes.

Venues for learning – to learn from other's knowledge and experience.

[LEARN MORE ABOUT WHAT WE DO](#)



Collaboration

The International Initiative for Impact Evaluation (3ie)

Discussions were initiated with the international Initiative for Impact Evaluation (3ie) about a potential formal, long-term collaboration.

Potential areas for collaboration include:

- Knowledge reviews / synthesis work,
 - Ability for DLL to draw on 3ie's experience and expertise in this area and involve 3ie in the implementation of synthesis work.
 - Making 3ie's knowledge resources available to DLL's primary audiences.
- Impact evaluations:
 - The ability to draw on 3ie's pool of experts to complement DLL's own thematic and geographic expertise.
- Cooperation on jointly delivered webinars, papers, blogs, and training and learning events.

A cooperation agreement with 3ie was signed in April 2022.

National research network

DLL will collaborate with researchers both nationally and internationally.

In Norway, we see a potential for being a hub of a network of researchers who are interested on working on impact evaluations in collaboration with development organisations.

We have invited relevant research institutions to share with us the names of researchers who might potentially be interested.



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