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# LOCAL SYSTEMS PRACTICE (LSP) ACTIVITY

## MOROCCO POST TRAINING ASSESSMENT

### SUMMARY REPORT

**DECEMBER 2018**

*This publication was produced for review by the United States Agency for International Development.*

*It was prepared by Mobilising for Rights Associates (MRA) with edits from the LSP consortium.*

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**December 20, 2018**

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**LSP Contacts:**

Patrick Sommerville  
Managing Director  
+1 (202) 266-0984  
[psommerville@linclocal.org](mailto:psommerville@linclocal.org)

Jenna White  
Program Director  
+1 (630) 220-0988  
[jwhite@linclocal.org](mailto:jwhite@linclocal.org)

Megan McDermott  
Program Associate  
+1 (202) 640-5462  
[mmcdermott@linclocal.org](mailto:mmcdermott@linclocal.org)

**DISCLAIMER**

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background

The Local Systems Practice (LSP) consortium held a Systems training in Rabat, Morocco from Monday, May 7 through Friday, May 11, 2018. Over 30 representatives of five USAID supported ISOs, four USAID contractors, and USAID Morocco participated in the workshop. The four modules of the training covered the Fundamentals of Systems Thinking, Systems Scanning, Causal Loop Diagrams, and Social Network Analysis.

### 1.2 Objectives

The goals of this LSP Morocco Activity assessment were to solicit and highlight key takeaways, insights, and recommendations from ISOs and MRA to assist in the refinement of LSP's training materials and approaches and identify potential areas for follow-up support to Moroccan ISOs.

## 2. METHODOLOGY

### 2.1 Research Strategy

This LSP Morocco Activity assessment was based on a series of semi-structured interviews held with 11 representatives of the five ISOs who participated in the May 2018 training workshop. Four of the ISO consultations were conducted in-person at the ISO offices,<sup>1</sup> and one via Skype interview. The interviews were conducted between December 4-11, 2018, and the conversations lasted from 75 minutes to over two hours. The English version of the questionnaire, as well as the Schedule and List of Stakeholders Consulted, may be found in the appendices of this report.

### 2.2 Interview Themes

The interviews began with a couple of baseline questions to capture respondents' definitions of a system, as well as their conception of themselves as part of a system. Subsequent questions solicited respondents' experiences of follow-up to the May workshop, including any transfer of concepts and tools to others, changes in their understanding of their function, and application of the systems thinking approach to their work.

Specific probes focused on identifying:

- Methodology and content adjustments to training materials and approaches used in the workshop;
- Priorities and wishes for future technical assistance and support.

Respondents were quite enthusiastic to participate in the conversations and eager to share their thoughts. Additionally, the group format of four of the interviews created a dynamic where respondents bounced ideas off of each other; for this reason it was not always possible to adhere to the questionnaire script and go through all of the questions in their original order. The compiled rough translations of the meetings notes can be found in the appendices of this report.

When concluding the meetings, the interviewers spontaneously added a new, final question that was not in the original questionnaire. Respondents were thanked for investing their time in the meeting, and asked,

*“If you now imagine yourself six months in the future, and you think back at this meeting, for you to think, ‘that was a good investment of my time, I am glad I took time out of my busy schedule to meet with them,’ what would have to have happened from now until then for you to think that?”*

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<sup>1</sup> In Rabat, Tetouan and Fes.

### 3. FINDINGS

This section presents a summary of the diverse responses provided by the ISO representatives during the meetings, grouped around the six primary questions in the questionnaire. Numbers in parentheses refer to the number of ISOs out of the five that gave that specific response.

It must be highlighted that all five of the ISOs expressed their utmost appreciation for the training and for the training team. They all described the training as very useful and interesting, and the trainers of high quality. As such, the below findings should be interpreted as an expression of their desire to continue with the systems thinking work and enhance their assimilation and appropriation of it.

#### 3.1 How do the ISOs define a system? (Question 1)

The five ISOs provided a range of definitions of a “system,” containing the following elements:

- With the objective of changing something or finding solutions to problems (5)
- Comprised of interrelated parts (4)
- That focuses on the importance of and analyzing the dynamic relationships and links between the parts (4)
- A project management approach/tool (3)<sup>2</sup>

#### 3.2 Do the ISOs think of themselves as part of a system? (Question 2)<sup>3</sup>

All of the ISOs consider themselves as part of a *civil society system* in Morocco (5), that works as a network or coalition to do advocacy and have an impact on public policies and laws in order to create change (5). As one ISO stated, “We are part of one big river that will lead to change.”

Additionally, the civil society system is *part of a larger system* with donors, institutions and political actors (4).

#### 3.3 Have the ISOs transferred concepts from the training to others? (Question 3)

**Sharing documentation:** All five of the ISOs reported presenting a summary of the training workshop and sharing the documentation with other members of their association. This was generally during a staff or Executive Board meeting. One of the ISOs also reported distributing the training documentation at a regional meeting with 30 local NGOs.

**Redoing the training:** Although all five ISOs expressed their intention and desire to repeat the training workshop for additional internal and external actors, none of them have done so yet or transferred the concepts to others in a formal or organized way.

**Challenges** to transferring the concepts from the training to others included:

- The need for some basic, simple, practical tools and exercises to be able to communicate the concepts to others (5).
- The belief that they have not yet mastered and assimilated the approach well enough themselves to be able to communicate it to others (5). Reasons given for this include the limited duration of the training and the short amount of time given to each topic (2), as well as the disparities in levels and capacities of the participants from their organization who attended (3).

**Additional research:** All of the ISOs reported having done on-line research on systems thinking, either prior to or after the training, to seek out additional information and tools, including YouTube videos and

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<sup>2</sup> It was notable that several of the ISOs included a bureaucratic and administrative element in their definitions of systems thinking.

<sup>3</sup> Several of these came from responses to the second part of question one asking for examples of a system and made the transition into question two come naturally. Other than these examples, respondents' examples were primarily limited to the political system. One ISO gave the example of an information system, and another that of the brain as a system.

practical guides. However, these were of limited assistance to the ISOs as they were either in English and hence inaccessible, and/or applied to topics other than social change and thus not directly related to their work.

### 3.4 Has the training changed how the ISOs understand their work/ function within the broader local system? (Question 4)

All five ISOs reported that the training changed the way that they reflect on their work and on their role and place within their broader local system. Notably, the training:

- Helped clarify, structure and organize certain notions, and categorize and name concepts that before they only understood instinctively (2). As one stated, “Now we notice things more and say among ourselves, ‘We saw this in the training, we saw that in the training.’”
- “Made us realize that we are not alone,” that it is important to identify all of the actors in their system and map the relationships among them (3).

### 3.5 Have the ISOs applied any of the tools or concepts from the training directly to their work? What would they need to do so? (Question 5)

One of the ISOs reported integrating systems thinking into two of their projects; this primarily involved stipulating into the projects’ consultants’ Terms of Reference the need to take a systems thinking approach when conducting analytical studies.

The other four ISOs reported “not really” having formally applied or integrated the systems thinking tools into their daily work. Challenges came almost exclusively from a sense of not having fully assimilated the concepts and tools to be able to apply them.<sup>4</sup>

**Challenges** to applying the concepts from the training directly to their work include:

- The need for post-training accompaniment to fully assimilate the concepts and make the transition from theory to practice (5).
- Resistance to change on the part of some members of their associations (3). As one ISO stated, “People need to be personally motivated to change and understand why it is important to change.”
- The short time – one week - allocated for the training resulted in insufficient time spent on each module to be able to fully understand (3).
- The need for contextualization of the training for the Moroccan context, with local examples (3).
- The need for practical examples of systems thinking as applied specifically to social change (3).
- The time necessary to integrate the new tools post-training into their work (3).

All five of the ISOs expressed their need for, interest in and enthusiasm for additional training and follow-up support. Indeed, all of the ISOs began the meetings by asking us what had taken us so long to hold this meeting, described their original expectations that there would be follow-up to the training, and gave examples of instances when they had discussed potential follow-up amongst themselves as a group. As one ISO put it, “The systems thinking approach should be integrated and adopted like the gender approach.”

**Proposals and Priorities for Follow-up Capacity Building** on systems thinking cited by ISOs include:

- On-going accompaniment and support through *an external resource person or coach* (5).
- Assimilation of concepts through opportunities for *regular practice* that is grounded in an *applied field project* (5).
- Practical resources that contain *exercises* and *concrete, real examples* from *social change work* (5)

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<sup>4</sup> It was a challenge for some respondents to name specific tools seen at the training, requiring prompting and reminders from the interviewers.

- Strategic and targeted *selection of participants* for follow-up trainings. ISOs highlighted the need to integrate both the decision-makers and the implementers within each organization into future efforts (3).
- Additional training on *KUMU* (3). Several ISOs noted that they had created a KUMU account and thought there would be, and want, follow-up to complete this piece of the training.
- Additional training to fully present and complete the *SNA* module “would be helpful” (3).

### 3.6 What would the ISOs like to see in follow-up to these assessment meetings? (Question 6)

Three of the ISOs stated that the assessment meetings had been helpful for them to revive their enthusiasm for systems thinking work and will incite them to start the internal follow-up. The ISOs expressed a host of wishes for follow-up to these assessment meetings.

## 4. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the above findings and express wishes of the respondents, MRA offers LINC the following content and methodology recommendations for consideration, in order to enhance and refine LSP’s training materials and approaches.

### 4.1 Content Recommendations

1. Provide in-depth, follow-up training for Moroccan ISOs on SNA and KUMU. As one respondent stated, the SNA and KUMU “was the most interesting and will motivate people.”
2. Supplement the current training program **with introductory sessions to convince and illustrate** to participants how and why the systems thinking approach is important and effective. Components of these sessions should build self-awareness and a sense of personal responsibility for change, and help participants:
  - See their own unhealthy patterns of behavior;
  - Understand how they are part of the problem, how their current strategies may be contributing to the status quo;
  - Recognize the advantages to systems thinking through concrete examples of successes;
  - Identify the disadvantages to conventional thinking;
  - Recognize common systems stories of failed social policies/attempts at change (systems archetypes/plot lines).<sup>5</sup>
3. Use examples of systems thinking specifically applied to **social change** efforts into training materials.<sup>6</sup>
4. **Contextualize** the examples for the specific country context.
5. Clarify for participants the links between all of the different pieces of the training workshop (systems scan, CLD, SNA, etc.) for greater **coherence and cohesiveness** to demonstrate the common thread among them.<sup>7</sup>

### 4.2 Methodology Recommendations

*For Training Workshops:*

1. Complement theoretical training days with a **Practicum fieldwork component** for applied learning, behavioral practice and feedback.
2. Conduct the different training modules **separately and divided** over a longer period of time.

<sup>5</sup> The first four chapters of *Systems Thinking for Social Change* (David Peter Stroh, 2015) have some excellent discussions and concrete examples of all of these points.

<sup>6</sup> *Systems Thinking for Social Change* (David Peter Stroh, 2015) also has excellent examples and discussions of systems thinking applied to specifically to social change efforts.

<sup>7</sup> The different pieces of the workshop and mix of different tools created confusion among the participants and they got “lost.”

3. Create “**mandatory**” **concrete steps and actions** to be taken by the participants and their organizations, before and after trainings, such as preparatory work, exercises, reports, and “homework.”
4. Establish detailed **participant profiles** with criteria for attendance at trainings, to target the appropriate people in terms of (a) decision-making, (b) competence /knowledge, and (c) ability to subsequently implement tools on the ground.
5. Explore **alternative pedagogical approaches** appropriate for adult experiential learning to move beyond a traditional lecture format.
6. Consider **simplifying the theoretical presentations** for enhanced assimilation of information and ability to transmit to others. One strategy could be to switch the order in the presentations, by starting with a practical, concrete example or story and then explain the theory that it illustrates.
7. Ensure **consistent availability of interpretation**, especially during small group work.
8. Build in additional time for **plenary feedback and revisions** of small group work during training.
9. Build small group work around **real-life exercises and actual projects** each NGO is currently working on.<sup>8</sup>
10. Ensure **sufficient and equal time for all modules**, especially for CLD and SNA.

*For follow-up technical assistance:*

1. Develop and provide simple, practical tools in Arabic, related to systems thinking applied to social change, for ISOs to use internally and with external actors, both to facilitate their own comprehension and to use in transferring concepts and tools to others.<sup>9</sup>
2. Create opportunities for ISOs to practice systems thinking on a daily basis, for learning by doing and producing, by applying the tools to their current projects.
3. Structure ongoing technical assistance that includes an ISO product,<sup>10</sup> external feedback and comments, revisions by the ISO, and resubmission, in concrete feedback loops.
4. Consider a diversity of mechanisms for delivery of technical assistance, including in-person intensive support through an embedded expert, as well as virtual assistance (webinar, on-line course, web portal, emails, videos, etc.).
5. Ensure follow-up that include both personalized assistance tailored for each ISO as well as collective capacity building for the entire group in their joint efforts.
6. Create mechanisms for concrete sharing and mutual feedback between and among the ISOs as a group.<sup>11</sup>
7. Support ISOs to hold smaller, **local systems thinking meetings** and repeat activities with the participation of diverse actors from within their own local systems.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Some respondents indicated that the small group work in the training, as it combined ISOs, was based on abstract and not actual projects that could have enhanced applied learning.

<sup>9</sup> *The Systems Thinking Playbook: Exercises to Stretch and Build Learning and Systems Thinking Capabilities* (Linda Booth Sweeney & Dennis Meadows) has numerous simple games and activities that could be helpful tools for the local groups.

<sup>10</sup> Such as a project proposal, strategic plan, advocacy campaign, etc.

<sup>11</sup> In other words, not just between LINC and each individual ISO.

<sup>12</sup> In other words, not just training workshops within their own NGO or just with other NGOs in their communities, but with a host of diverse actors including public elected officials and civil servants

## **ANNEX A SCOPE OF WORK**

### **Description of Services (Scope of Work)**

The contractor will solicit feedback from the 5 ISOs who attended the LSP training that took place in May, 2018 in Rabat, Morocco. Key activities and deliverables include:

- Provide input into the questionnaire
- Schedule phone or in-person sessions to obtain feedback from ISOs. (Note, this scope of work only allows for in-person sessions with organizations located in Rabat).
- Conduct 90-minute feedback sessions with each organization
- Provide notes from each session in English
- Deliver a summary document highlighting key takeaways, insights, and recommendations from ISOs and MRA to assist in the refinement of LSP's training materials and approaches
- Participate in a debrief call with members from LSP to discuss findings

## ANNEX B STAKEHOLDERS CONSULTED AND CALENDAR OF INTERVIEWS

DAT	ISO/LOCATION	PARTICIPANTS
December 4, 2018 10:30am-12pm	<i>Forum Azzahrae pour la femme marocaine/Rabat</i>	Khadija El Messoudi
		Hasnae Mostaid
		Amine el Meziane
December 5, 2018 10-11 :30am	<i>AMSED/Rabat</i>	Issam Ouchen
		Karima Benjelloun
December 6, 2018 1:45-3pm	<i>Association Ennakhil /Marrakech (via Skype)</i>	Hassan Naji
December 7, 2018 11am-1pm	<i>Association la Colombe Blanche /Tetouan</i>	Ahmed Aidani
		Ouafae El Ghalia
		Mohamed El Bekkali
December 11, 2018 11am-12 :30pm	<i>Mouvement Alternatives Citoyennes ALCI /Fes</i>	Mohamed Naih
		Mohammed Ajakan

## ANNEX C QUESTIONNAIRE

### USAID Local Systems Practice Activity Morocco Post-Training Questionnaire

#### Baseline Questions:

- 1) How would you define a system? Can you provide one or two examples that come to mind?
- 2) Do you think of your organization as part of a system? If yes, can you describe how?

#### Training Follow-Up Questions:

- 3) Have you attempted to – or been successful in – transferring concepts from the training to other members of your organization who were not in attendance? Or to other outside stakeholders? If yes, can you describe the process? If not, can you explain why not?
- 4) Did the training change how you understand your organization's work / its function within the broader local system?
  - i) If yes –
    - (1) Can you describe how your understanding has changed?
    - (2) Has this new understanding resulted in any practical changes about how your organization operates (e.g., changes in your mission statement, strategic plan, key indicators that you track and document, new partners that you work with, designing new activities or incentives, etc.)
  - ii) If no –
    - (1) Can you explain why not?
      - (a) Probing: Did you already have a strong understanding of systems?
      - (b) Were the concepts covered during the training unclear or inaccessible?
      - (c) Did you find it difficult to follow the translated content or experience conceptual confusion as a result of the translation?
      - (d) Probe for content and method items. Probe for items to discontinue or new things to try.
- 5) Have you applied any of the tools or concepts you learned during the training directly to your work within the organization? To your work with other outside stakeholders?
  - i) If yes –
    - (1) Which concepts or tools have you used? Can you describe how you are using them?
    - (2) Based on the concepts and tools from the training you found most useful, what do you think made these stand out more than the others?
      - (a) Probing: Were the trainers more engaging?
      - (b) Was the content more accessible or more applicable to your work? Were certain exercises more effective?
      - (c) Did you apply any of them immediately after the training? Which one(s)?
      - (d) Were there any that you took additional time to learn more about before applying them to your work? How / from where did you learn more?
      - (e) What analytical and/or practical challenges have you experienced as you were applying these tools to your work?
      - (f) Did you have to generate buy-in from other members of the organization before integrating these approach(es) / tool(s)? If yes, how did you go about doing this?
      - (g) If some members of your organization do not want to embrace these tools, please explain their rationale.
      - (h) Are there any tools / approaches from the training that you think would be useful to your organization, but require additional support or training to fully engage with?
        - (i) Probing: Which ones? How would these be useful?

- (i) Would you be interested in additional training or support now or in the future if it were available? What kind would be helpful?
  - (i) Probing: On which topics? In what formats?
- ii) If no –
  - (1) Can you explain why not?
  - (a) Probing: Have you not found systems tools to be helpful? Do you feel that you lack knowledge, time and resources to apply the tools? etc.
  - (b) Was there anything specific about the training that could have been changed to facilitate better application of the concepts?
    - (i) Probe for content and method items.
    - (ii) Probe for items to discontinue or new things to try.
  - (c) Are there any tools / approaches from the training that you think would be useful to your organization, but require additional support or training to fully engage with?
    - (i) Probing (if yes): Which ones? How would these be useful?
  - (d) Would you be interested in additional training or support now or in the future if it were available?
    - (i) Probing: On which topics? In what formats?
    - (ii) If you are currently using any specific tools/approaches in your work (other than the systems tools covered in training), please explain which ones.

**Other:**

- 6) Do you have any additional comments, reflections or recommendations about the systems training?