# DESIGNING FOR VALUES

## BEST PRACTICES AND LESSONS LEARNED FROM EN.V'S BUILD PROGRAM

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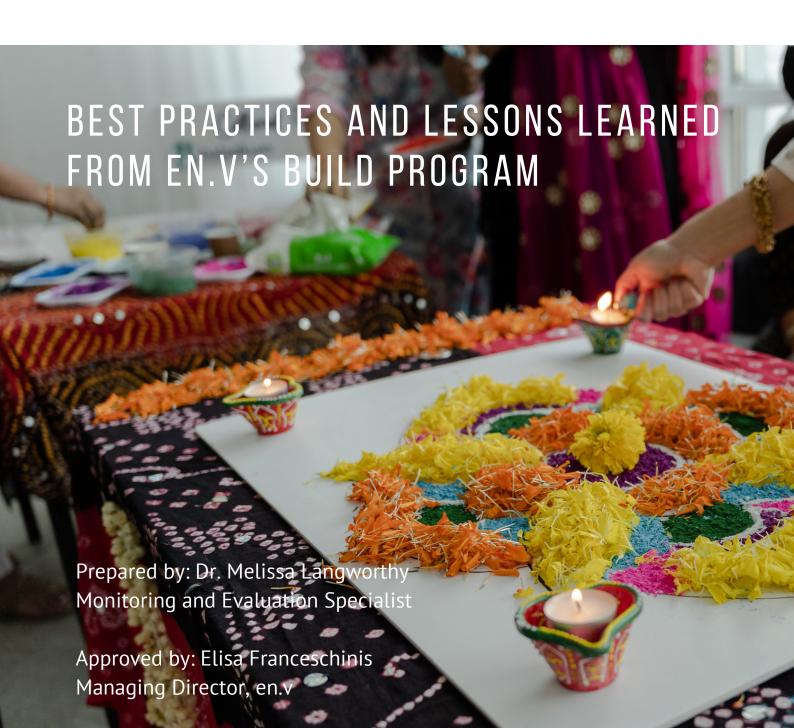
## About en.v

en.v (a division of COMMUN, a General Trading and Contracting company registered in the State of Kuwait) is a women-led, culturally diverse and interdisciplinary team of current and former Kuwait residents and nationals working together to foster a more united, compassionate and resilient society – locally and globally. Over the past decade, they have been working with and building bridges between a wide array of stakeholders, including corporates, governmental, intergovernmental and international institutions, foundations, educators, youth, civil society organizations and migrant community groups. Leveraging their own and their partners' learnings, experience and networks, they design and facilitate inclusive and participatory processes that support the development of more equitable solutions and narratives.

## About this report

At the conclusion of the BUILD project activities in December 2021, en.v determined that a 'lesson's learned' report from this dynamic project would be a valuable asset to others in the CSO community seeking to utilize asset-based, participatory, and 'whole-of-society' approaches in community organizing and project design.  They reached out to Melissa Langworthy, PhD (a monitoring and evaluation specialist with experience working with intersectional and inclusive programs and familiarity with Kuwaiti civil society) to develop a public-facing report that would review the BUILD activities, capture best practices, and present recommendations to guide implementation of these approaches.

Dr. Langworthy conducted a systematic review of the project documentation, including donor reports, social media posts and public publications (i.e., blogs and other articles), and video recordings of online meetings and program activities.  The project reports provided a strong narrative of the shifting structure of the program activities and the rationale for each adjustment. Recorded project activities provided a first-hand insight into the interactions and processes as experienced by the program participants. Finally, the full interviews with participants recorded in preparation for the video documentary provided a key input to the findings presented in this report.

As a resident of Kuwait and frequent en.v collaborator, Dr. Langworthy identified, aggregated, and extracted key components from these resources that captured the unique and impactful results of the project. Particular attention was paid to the testimonials of the facilitators and the participants, which provided clear insights into the most impactful mechanisms throughout the project implementation.  The most powerful and actionable practices were extracted and compiled in the review of best practices and recommendations presented in this report.

## 1. Introduction: The inspiration

Migrant worker communities in Kuwait cannot legally create formal associations or advocate for their own rights[1].  As a result, these populations depend heavily on local civil society organizations (CSOs) to lobby for increased legal protections, educate and shift mindsets amongst the general population, and provide support to victimized individuals.  While a loose, and limited, network of

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[1] https://freedomhouse.org/country/kuwait/freedom-world/2019

CSOs trying to address these gaps exists in Kuwait, en.v's needs assessment of the country's civic sector[2] found that numerous challenges remain, including:

- Lack of engagement by the general public and, related, absence of strategic communication by CSOs;
- Lack of truly participatory advocacy projects that accurately reflect and represent the voices and interest of marginalized communities;
- A lack of shared platforms for CSOs to share knowledge, resources, and information to alleviate duplication of efforts and strategically identify and address gaps;
- Insufficient and ineffective cross-sectoral collaboration, and
- Lack of adequate monitoring and evaluation skills, allowing programs to be both designed and assessed for more effective impact.

A final challenge noted by the en.v team was the deeply engrained stereotypes and assumptions associated with migrant workers, especially those from Asian and African countries, which led to the 'othering' and dehumanization of individuals of these communities and served to legitimize their ill-treatment and abuse[3].

In an effort to promote inclusion, participation, and growth in the civic sector, in 2019 en.v applied to the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) for support on an initiative that would specifically seek to improve the lives of migrant workers in Kuwait by providing those advocating on their behalf with the tools and resources needed to more effectively engage their beneficiaries and other stakeholders, and design more collaborative and innovative initiatives with measurable impacts.

This was the start of the BUILD program, a two-year project that ran between January 2020 and December 2021. Throughout the implementation of the BUILD project activities, en.v remained committed to the values of participatory, creative, collaborative and empathetic approaches. However, challenges arising during the implementation of the BUILD project, including the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic in March of 2020, forced the team to adapt, learn, and change. Many of these lessons have shifted the operation of en.v overall, having already informed other projects, some already in implementation phases as well as proposal development for new projects.

The objectives of this report are to document the process and model utilized in the BUILD program as well as provide lessons learned for other actors and stakeholders working to:

- Promote the rights of and improve the lives of vulnerable communities
- Adopt participatory, innovative, interdisciplinary and intersectional approaches.

## 2. The Project: Implementation overview and activities

In 2019, en.v applied to the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) to propose the implementation of 'a program that would specifically seek to improve the lives of migrant workers in Kuwait by providing those advocating on their behalf with the tools and resources needed to more effectively engage their beneficiaries and other stakeholders and design more collaborative and

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[2] Developed in collaboration with Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung, Burgan Bank, and the Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Sciences (KFAS).
[3] https://www.migrant-rights.org/2018/08/in-kuwait-the-discourse-on-migrant-workers-is-lively-and-divided/

innovative initiatives with measurable impact.' (Proposal (2019) p. 4). The goals and objectives of the BUILD program are presented in Box 1.

*Box 1: BUILD program goals and objectives*

*Impact Hypothesis:* If local CSOs and activists promoting migrant workers' rights in Kuwait are provided with the tools and opportunity to develop more participatory, collaborative and innovative programming, and are able to more effectively challenge negative stereotypes and assumptions amongst the general population through the use of multimedia resources, they will increase their reach and impact, effectively improving the lives of low-skilled migrant workers in Kuwait.

*Goal:* To foster the development and implementation of initiatives effectively improving the lives of low-skilled migrant workers in Kuwait.

*Objective 1*: To provide local CSOs and activists working in the field of migrant workers' rights with the skills and tools needed to develop more participatory, engaging and creative initiatives.

*Objective 2*: To support the development and implementation of innovative and user-centric projects directly or indirectly improving the lives of low-skilled migrant workers.

*Objective 3*: Private sector actors, employers and members of the wider community undertake targeted efforts to improve work conditions for migrant workers in low skilled sectors.

Table 1 lists the proposed components and activities of the BUILD project as originally developed by en.v as well as a comparative list of the actual activities that were undertaken. The remainder of this section will provide details of each project activity as implemented, along with the processes and purposes that led to evolution of the project design.

*Table 1: Proposed and Actual BUILD Project Activities*

| Proposed project activities: | Actual project activities: |
|---|---|
| 1. Stakeholder mapping<br>2. Participatory Project Design workshop: (two-day workshop for two representatives from each CSO)<br>3. Innovative outreach workshop<br>4. Ideathon: Two day-collaborative project-based competition<br>5. Award and management of sub-grants: half-day project planning and budgeting lab, mentoring by en.v<br>   a. Two Fail fests to share challenges and brainstorm solutions<br>   b. Two community meet ups to identify new potential collaborations across sectors (formal, networking events) | 1. Stakeholder mapping<br>2. Emergency response coordination meetings<br>3. Innovative Outreach Workshop<br>4. Principles of community organizing workshop<br>5. Participatory Design Workshop<br>6. Ideathon<br>7. Award and management of sub-grants<br>   a. One-on-one support for project teams in further development and implementation of concepts<br>   b. Three online 'project design' sessions with project teams<br>   c. Fail fest<br>8. Community meet up |

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| 6. Lessons Learned Workshop: program participants reflect on lessons learned through the entire program and identify next steps. | 9. One-on-one needs assessment sessions with each team<br>10. Documentary video to provide outreach for Ideathon outcomes<br>11. Lessons Learned Report |

**Stakeholder Mapping:** Allowed identification of appropriate potential participants and partners working on migrant workers' rights including activists, community groups representing migrants from different countries of origin, and Kuwaiti social organizations. Team members held several meetings with CSOs and migrant community groups to discuss the needs and assets of the various migrant community organizations working on the ground on how to effectively engage them in the project.

*Outcome:* Stakeholder assessment and selection of 5-8 CSO program participants.

**Emergency Response Team Meetings (Similar to Ideathon – seed solutions in short time frame):**
As a result of continuing communication with the CSO and migrant community representatives, many of whom were part of the stakeholder mapping consultations, en.v was privy to information of the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and ensuing lockdown on migrant communities in Kuwait. The team noted
a serious gap between government and civil society responses and the needs of the most vulnerable populations.  In response, en.v organized meetings between those involved in the COVID response (CSOs, international organizations, medical experts, private sector employers) and representatives of the migrant communities who could provide real-time, first-hand experiences of 'on the ground' circumstances and the shortfalls of policies and practices, especially those from governments and charities.

These meetings became a regular occurrence, with five meetings held between March and June 2020, and served to provide continued communication and critical technical inputs into the formation of response plans by different national and international actors. As a result, these activities created livelihood opportunities, increased accessibility of information (through a diversity of language translations), facilitated aid delivery, addressed specific needs related to mental health and family care, and influenced policy recommendations.

*Outcomes:*  The Emergency Response Team Meetings allowed en.v and the migrant worker community organizations to identify ways in which traditional emergency response methods were ineffective in their communities and excluded many of the most vulnerable. The group, which included funders of several national relief coordination mechanisms, was able to successfully redirect national and private sector resources to support the initiatives already operated by the migrant community organizations, create a network of local, national, and international organizations to coordinate effective delivery of emergency supplies, and directly supported 22,500 vulnerable migrant workers throughout the entirety of the lockdown period. In addition, this case study of mutual aid, highlighting the effectiveness of community response versus the one-way charity model, was used by en.v to design training materials for youth addressing issues of equity, bias, power, positionality, marginalization and community assets within Kuwait, and delivered to

students in a number of formal and non-formal educational settings. It was also highlighted in the Middle East Institute's series on "COVID-19 in the Middle East and Asia: Impacts and Responses"[4].

**Innovative Outreach Workshop**
Eleven organizations participated in the Innovative Outreach Workshop which was held over four sessions.  The workshop was designed to upskill participants through the promotion of innovative, multidisciplinary communication and awareness-raising tools for promoting public awareness and behavior change. The topics covered include creativity and creative tools for social and behavioural change; advocacy and campaigning; storytelling, empathy and public narrative; and strategizing for social and institutional reforms.

*Outcomes:* While participants reported strong applications for the training content in their advocacy efforts, they also commented that they would have liked to have more time to discuss potential collaborative initiatives with other participating organizations.  As a result, a fifth session named 'BUILD Unworkshop: Exploring Collaborations' was held.  This lightly facilitated session allowed participants the space to discuss ideas and potential collaborations around shared advocacy issues and labor and migrant rights, but it also allowed them to cement deeper connections and establish continuing communication mechanisms, in this case a WhatsApp group.

**Principles of Community Organizing Workshop**
While planning for the Participatory Design Workshop, migrant community organizers expressed concern that migrant leaders may need additional training on core principles related to effective community organizing. en.v responded by developing an additional training, in consultation with the migrant community organizers, to provide participants with an introduction to concepts such as leadership, good governance, transparency, stakeholder engagement, and cooperative advocacy.

*Outcome:* In addition to the training outcomes of the session, stronger relationships and better coordination was reported among the various migrant community groups. This session also allowed en.v to develop a better understanding of how online trainings could be made more engaging for migrant workers and fed into the final planning for the Participatory Design Workshop.

**Participatory Design Workshop**
The Participatory Design Workshop was held over two four-hour online sessions and included assignments that participants would have to complete in small groups between these sessions.  The design for this workshop was further refined to accommodate the learning from the Principles of Community Organizing Workshop. Participants were required to work in small groups and topics covered included: building trust and empathy; co-designing iterative life cycles and participatory approaches; principles of design thinking; processes, procedures and methods of participatory project design; grassroots participation and crowdsourcing; the democratization of feedback; and road mapping, prototyping, and testing solutions. Groups were assigned to collect information from migrant workers in Kuwait and to use this information to develop 'persona profiles' that represented the experiences of some of the most vulnerable migrant workers (or 'extreme users' in design terminology) in Kuwait.

*Outcomes:* The experience of the participatory design workshop gave important learnings to en.v, particularly in terms of the need to ensure that the language and formats used are accessible to

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[4] https://www.mei.edu/publications/threats-victims-or-allies-migrant-communities-kuwaits-covid19-response

people with diverse educational backgrounds and language skills.  These learnings would prove to be critical to the success of the Ideathon.  The persona profiles were also integrated into the Ideathon.

Additionally, en.v saw the efficacy of the groundwork training on empathy and participatory design as the teams started to adjust their online meet-ups to accommodate the demanding schedules of the members of their teams who were domestic workers or doing shift-work. For one team, this meant holding 2 meetings a day, in order to include everyone, or, in the case of another team, holding meetings at 11pm so that their team member could attend after her employers slept.  This level of conscious effort taken by the participants in BUILD from the beginning carried forward into the Ideathon. The extra effort that went into creating inclusive design meetings allowed teams to emerge with complex, well-grounded extreme user profiles, which were the foundation for the Ideathon. This initial experience also established the ethos that would inform the work of the teams in the Ideathon, with groups creating different platforms to make sure they had ongoing communication with all team members and could capture the community experts' ideas and inputs, even when difficult work situations made it impossible for those team members to speak in the Ideathon or attend all the sessions.

**Ideathon[5]**
The Ideathon was an eight-day collaborative effort whereby participants were divided into ten teams, each with at least one community expert (migrant community member representative) and a representative of a CSO who had participated in previous workshops. Partner organization Gray Area Collective was contracted to develop the activities and content with a focus on design thinking and empathetic project design.  An international group of facilitators guided the teams through detailed activities in order to apply design thinking, empathetic, and asset-based approaches and to collaboratively ideate and create concepts for projects engaging with the theme of 'How might we impact the lives of migrant workers?'. At the end of the week, ten concepts were presented and three were selected (through evaluation by guest evaluators) to receive further development and sub-grant funding. A detailed description of the three selected projects is provided in Box 2.
*Outcomes:* In addition to the three concepts selected for further development, all Ideathon participants were offered additional team building opportunities in the form of prizes arranged with local businesses, including shared lunches and dinners, dance classes, art therapy classes, and glass-blowing classes. A 'design lab' series was facilitated with partner organization Gray Area to support the selected teams to refine the concept and prototype, micro-pilot and test their strategy, and to provide one final feedback session with Ideathon facilitators and participants.

*Box 2: Detailed descriptions of the three selected Ideathon projects*

| eBuddy | Desert Days of the Forgotten | Baladkum |
|---|---|---|
| An online platform that enables case workers supporting vulnerable migrant workers to work more effectively through offering a complaint tracking system. Through eBuddy, case workers | A creative awareness-raising and co-building project specifically targeting shepherds living in isolation. The project aims to collaboratively assess the living and social conditions of | An online and off-line information-sharing platform and bulletin that helps build community among migrant workers from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds by providing crowd-sourced |

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[5] An Ideathon is an intensive brainstorming event where multiple stakeholders work together to dissect predefined problems, identify opportunities, and ideate viable solutions. Participants usually work in teams, present multiple solutions and ideas, and then work to identify and develop the strongest one.

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| can enter, track, assign, resolve, and report complaints brought by migrant workers. | shepherds and then design social and housing spaces to improve their mental and physical wellbeing in collaboration with local volunteers, architects and designers, as well as capture shepherds' lives through their eyes using generated content to raise awareness amongst the wider society. | entertainment and educational content, as well as easy access to key support information (e.g., important contact numbers, process details, resources, etc.). |

**Fail Fest**

One fail fest was held for team members engaged in the three sub-grant receiving projects. The Fail fest was designed to give the subgrantees an opportunity to talk about the challenges they faced during the implementation of their projects and share feedback and resources to address these challenges. Importantly, the event emphasized the social taboos around the concept of failure and encouraged an open conversation around these experiences, and reinterpreted these events as challenges, stepping stones, and learning opportunities.

_Outcomes:_ Participants clearly described the value of embracing process, asking for help, and enacting continuous assessment and evolution of a project. They developed a sense of community through experiencing common roadblocks and committed to solidarity and continuing investments in promoting community change. One of the groups, primarily consisting of bi-cultural youth, spoke about their team becoming the first space they had felt they belonged to in Kuwait, as their own bi-cultural identities were valued and understood. They had all been drawn to the project by their own experience of some form of marginalization attached to identity and felt that these experiences made them feel more strongly about the situation of their teammates who were from the migrant community, the most excluded community. This team has remained consistently passionate and engaged in their project, demonstrating the power of intersectionality in this work, where all team members benefited from a sense of greater agency and belonging.

**Community Meet-Up**

In partnership with Emergency Response Coordination team-member the International Labor Organization (ILO), en.v hosted a community meet-up gathering key stakeholders from across diverse backgrounds and organizations to collectively reflect and explore intersectional and community-based approaches to promoting mental health, wellbeing, and connection, particularly amongst vulnerable migrant communities. Representatives from all three Ideathon project teams participated in this meet-up.

_Outcomes:_ Key outputs from the meet-up discussions emphasized the need for more training for members of the migrant community in different skill areas to deepen their interactions with CSOs (e.g., rights training, public health and domestic violence, and community integration). Local businesses and healthcare providers were also identified as needing additional awareness of labor rights and migrant community health needs, respectively. Finally, the needs for connection within and between the different migrant community groups were emphasized. The participants were able

to identify 12 different ideas for how to address these needs within existing resources and partnerships.

Given the close and continuing collaboration of the teams and other community organizations in the development and implementation stages, en.v decided that the second Fail fests and community meet-up listed in the original program design were no longer needed.  Further, en.v decided to replace the second Fail fest and the planned Lessons Learned Workshop with one-on-one needs assessments   sessions with each team (facilitated by en.v), as well as this Lessons Learned report.  In the needs assessment sessions, they had participants reflect on the project's and their own journeys from the Ideathon until the present time, think about their immediate and long-term visions for their projects, and identify specific support they will need to get to support these visions in the future. en.v then provided connections to appropriate training, partners, and collaborations to concretely support these visions.

**Documentary Video**
At the conclusion of the Ideathon, en.v decided to create a documentary to:
1.  Capture and communicate the Ideathon process
2.  Highlight the efforts to design and implement more collaborative and inclusive programming
3.  Use the Ideathon as a case study to illustrate what becomes possible when participatory, asset-based, collaborative, and empathetic approaches are used.

*Outcomes:* The BUILD Ideathon 2020 documentary was launched via YouTube and then utilized to conduct an outreach campaign.

## 3.  The  Approach: The five values

Throughout the evolution of the BUILD project, en.v was guided by five key values.  These values formed and informed the project in ways that prioritized methods that were participatory, asset-based, collaborative, empathetic, and user-centric.

**(1) A participatory, whole of society approach emphasized the inclusion of a diversity of stakeholders and established a key role for community experts.**  Multi-stakeholder engagement, sometimes called a 'whole of society' approach, emphasizes that different stakeholder groups often overlap in terms of opportunities for cooperation and synergies, including state and non-state actors, private sector, civil society, and academia[6]. Meaningful inclusion of these diverse stakeholders, however, must be complemented through participatory project design processes[7], which demand the active participation and integration of the perspectives of all participants, including the 'on the ground' inputs from people directly impacted by the issues being discussed.

en.v prioritized a participatory, whole of society approach at multiple levels in each of the BUILD project activities.  First, the CSOs and individuals gathered in each meeting were selected with the whole of society approach in mind.  The inclusion of community experts was among one of the most successful examples of this approach and was able to not only influence the project outcomes in terms of providing real-time information about migrant workers in Kuwait, but also created an environment where these participants were treated with dignity and developed a sense of respect

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[6] Cazarez-Grageda, K. (2018). "The Whole of Society Approach: Levels of engagement and meaningful participation of different stakeholders in the review process of the 2030 Agenda." GIZ *Discussion Paper.*
[7] https://ctb.ku.edu/en/table-of-contents/analyze/where-to-start/participatory-approaches/main

with other participants.  Second, en.v enabled CSOs to have an opportunity to ideate and develop solutions, a process that is often neglected in the daily demands of community services. Third, the BUILD program ensured that each program element prioritized relationship-building between migrant community members, other community members, decision-makers, and CSOs. Finally, each training session was designed to introduce key concepts conducive to participatory approaches, including storytelling, design thinking, and empathy-based methodologies.

**(2) An asset-based approach positioned vulnerable migrant workers as valued agents of knowledge and experience.** Asset based community development approaches conceptualize vulnerable and marginalized community members as valuable (and often unrecognized) actors who can offer key insights to mobilize solutions[8]. Throughout the BUILD project implementation, en.v took specific steps to position migrant worker community members as effective advocates with insights into responsive solutions for the migrant community. To fully engage the community experts en.v ensured that project sessions were safe spaces and enabled each participant to have an equal voice.  This not only allowed the community experts to speak effectively and garner respectful treatment, but also allowed the traditional power holders (e.g., privileged individuals as well as government and other powerful stakeholders) to question their own assumptions and capacity to speak for others, which can lead to frustration and ineffective projects and policies. The resulting social climate facilitated a supportive, empathetic, and collaborative space to discern the changes that can be easily and immediately made at the community level.

**(3) Collaborative learning and co-creation approaches build social trust and cohesion, which unlocks creativity.**  Collaborative learning and co-creation approaches emphasize community building, knowledge transfer and sharing, process and workflow, team learning, and networked, or connected, learning[9]. en.v provided continuous support to individuals and organizations to work through differences, identify and understand commonalities, define shared values, and work towards shared goals while embracing these differences and commonalities.  Indeed, in the Ideathon, the commitment to collaborative learning and co-creation approaches drove a diversity of ideas that provided the building blocks for big solutions.  The emphasis on social trust and cohesion allowed the BUILD project to meet the challenge of asking participants to undertake deep and meaningful collaborations in a short time period.  Through collaborative and co-creative approaches, en.v was able to create safe spaces and engage shared goals even in a context pressurized by this short timeframe.

Throughout the implementation of the BUILD program, en.v faced challenges in creating accessible and inclusive online and offline spaces.  Key to the effective participation of community experts was the tireless attention of the en.v team, facilitators, and other participants to troubleshooting issues with availability (e.g., in consideration of the demanding and often inflexible work environments of the community experts) and language barriers to ensure maximum opportunities for community expert involvement and contributions.

**(4) Active listening and empathy provided the cornerstone to strong and effective communication and relationship-building.**  Active listening is a conscious, focused effort to understand and reflect back the experiences of the other person[10]. Empathy requires us to put aside our learning, culture, knowledge, opinions, and worldview purposefully in order to understand other peoples' experiences

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[8] Collaborative for Neighborhood Transformation. "What is Asset-based Community Development: A toolkit."
[9] https://www.chieflearningofficer.com/2007/06/22/five-approaches-to-collaborative-learning/
[10] https://www.giftoflifeinstitute.org/the-importance-of-active-listening/

of things deeply and meaningfully[11]. Both active listening and empathy are critical elements in each of the other approaches enumerated in this section. Active listening and empathy created spaces for BUILD participants to meaningfully engage with ideas and to effectively analyze them in terms of opportunities, gaps, and threats. en.v further engaged active listening and empathy to create safe and conducive spaces (online and offline) for participants to build personal and cultural bridges and ensure trust and bonding between participants. Active listening and empathetic interactions enabled the participants to weather the persistent and destabilizing challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic in their own lives while maintaining continued participation in the project. This continued bonding is evident in the continuing individual and organizational relationships of the BUILD participants. Importantly, these relationships include the community experts, whom other participants have continued to turn to as resources and collaborators in recognition of their valuable knowledge and contributions.

**(5) Design thinking processes engaged participatory, asset-based, collaborative, and empathetic approaches to develop solutions to a complex social challenge.** Design thinking has been identified as the 'next chapter' in designing for human-centered social innovation[12]. The first stage of a design-thinking process is empathizing which ensures that solutions and products are human-centered, in addition to creative, iterative, and collaborative. Throughout the BUILD project, en.v engaged participants in creative, empathy-building activities (e.g., drawing, storytelling, and role playing). In addition to positively impacting the ideas created, these activities resulted in decreased feelings of stress and more open minds among participants. Design thinking processes ask participants to focus on 'extreme users' – those who are ostracized, marginalized, or stigmatized by the barriers they face and whose experiences can provide unique insights to the problem at hand[13]. For en.v, design thinking and the opportunity to valorize the assets of migrant worker communities as 'extreme users' provided strong opportunities to increase access and participation among migrant workers and to incorporate intersectional approaches[14]. It further allowed the BUILD activities to discern projects that may sound "cool" from those that maximize the value to the end user which allowed for new insights and developed alternative directions for development.

## 4. The Takeaways: Best practices & lessons learned

**Stakeholders are best when they are diverse and representative:**

1. Size doesn't (always) matter: Multi-stakeholder forums should include a diversity of local and national stakeholders and members of beneficiary communities. Relevant international bodies are also important contributors. Respect and equality of voice for each stakeholder, regardless of size, notoriety, and power, is key to maximizing the value of these forums.
2. Relationships take work: Stakeholder relationships require sustained conversations and relationship-building work that continues outside of immediate problem-solving situations.

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[11] https://www.interaction-design.org/literature/article/how-to-develop-an-empathic-approach-in-design-thinking

[12] https://ssir.org/articles/entry/the_next_chapter_in_design_for_social_innovation

[13] https://accessibilityinclusivedesigncasestudies.wordpress.com/social-inclusion-theoretical-rebuilt/isaac-mazer-rebuilt/

[14] Intersectional approaches recognize that individuals face multiple and intersecting forms of structural discrimination (e.g., by identity such as race, gender, and immigration status). https://www.opportunityagenda.org/explore/resources-publications/ten-tips-putting-intersectionality-practice

3. Community expertise is the lynchpin of program design and development: Participatory inclusion of valuable first-hand expertise from target communities leverages the maximum impacts from available knowledge, networks, and resources.
4. Look for opportunities to upskill: Advocates and existing CSO workers are often so overwhelmed with tasks, that they cannot take time to develop and build new, more effective strategies. Including CSO representatives as stakeholders promotes collaboration, but also provides an experiential touchstone for idea validation based on lived experience that reduces time and field-testing requirements.
5. Create a community: Collaborative approaches are important, but task-centered trainings and events may not leave enough time for deeper connections and network building. Build collaboration through adding a networking-focused 'unworkshop' session to other events and trainings.
6. Don't be afraid to evolve: Program and project proposals are a best-effort to design appropriate activities and services. Organizations, project teams, and funders should invite and support adjustments based on new or unexpected information that evolves from program activities and outcomes.

**Participatory and asset-based approaches add value to project design:**

1. Participatory project design is a valuable tool: Active participation of target community members increases community ownership and enhances effectiveness of project design and outcomes.
2. Successful participatory efforts must be asset-based: Participation of community members is meaningless without clear recognition that target communities have valuable knowledge and experiences that will benefit the project design process. Shifting mindsets from target communities as inactive beneficiaries to target community members being valuable knowledge-holders will promote successful incorporation of participatory approaches.
3. Participatory, asset-based, and collaborative approaches can provide results in short-time frames.

**Creating communities online is possible and powerful:**

1. Physical engagement is about more than just place: In online activities, participants can be engaged through shared experiences, such as music or dance performances. Tactile collaborative activities, supported through participant 'kit boxes' where possible, provide a stimulating environment and bring the online experience into a physical space.
2. Safe spaces promote meaningful outcomes: When participants feel heard, safe and respected they are more likely to articulate meaningful contributions, which not only enhance participant experiences, but lead to more effective and impactful solutions.
3. Facilitator selection is central to achieving a sense of community: Facilitators should have a comprehensive understanding of the relevant social and political landscape, experience developing innovative and creative initiatives, and the ability to make people feel appreciated, engaged and motivated.
4. Integrate multiple platforms to facilitate communication, access, and feelings of space: Online meetings/ trainings don't need to be limited to one platform. Creating multiple platforms for interaction, including collaborative spaces (e.g., MIRO, google docs) and additional communication channels (e.g., WhatsApp groups) can strengthen group cohesion

and communication as well as provide continuous support for group members when needed.

**The secret ingredient is empathy:**

1. Empathy is not just an emotional state, it is a methodology: Thinking through problems and solutions with others strengthens collaboration and group cohesion. Utilizing methods such as storytelling, role playing, and shadowing develops group trust through the sharing of personal experiences and is integral to developing impactful programs.
2. Empathy driven approaches set the foundation for continuing participant relationships: Relationships built on values of empathy and equal voice have ripple effects that extend beyond a project or training event into the community.
3. Empathy-focused program design goes beyond addressing a problem.  It also requires recognizing and celebrating the core skills and strengths of other team members in ways that can be used to improve ideation and create meaningful solutions.