

Community-Led Development Programme Impact Evaluation

Whananāki Community Case Study



Introduction

Hāpai Hapori, within the Department of Internal Affairs (DIA) commissioned an impact evaluation of the Community-Led Development Programme (CLDP). Focused on the experiences of four partnering communities transitioning from the programme, a report presented summative findings examining the CLDP's outcomes and impact, including transformations in community, sustainability, wellbeing enhancement, realisation of aspirations, enablers of success and challenges, and recommendations for future activities.

This case study provides detailed reflections on the impact of CLDP partnership on one of the four communities - Whananāki.

Data collection and analysis

The selected case study communities represent diverse characteristics, including partnership duration, community initiatives, and demographic factors.

This case study draws insights from data collected during a two-day site visit in April 2024, involving observations of activities and interviews with members of Te Whana o Te Nanakia Charitable Trust, partnering organisations, hapū and community members. The Hāpai Hapori lead advisor was also interviewed. Data collection was supplemented by document analysis, including quarterly and results reports provided by Hāpai Hapori.

Community-led development programme overview

The overarching intended goal for the CLDP is “strong, resilient communities, hapū and iwi achieving locally owned visions and goals.” The two key aims of the CLDP, set out in its purpose, are:

- The CLDP supports communities of place, as well as hapū and iwi, to achieve their collective vision using a community-led approach.
- The CLDP is a partnering approach by the Department to invest in communities, hapū and iwi through intensive advisory services and, where appropriate, the provision of funding to help New Zealand build strong communities.

The DIA CLDP offers a flexible model of funding that supports community goals and needs as they change and develop. The programme emphasises community and partnerships drawing on the CLD principles. The programme shifts the focus away from small grants for individual projects and/or organisations, to an approach where communities have access to flexible funding that contributes to overall community wellbeing. DIA offers expertise as needed to communities, with a programme focus of supporting new and emerging community development. The CLDP began in 2011 with five pilot communities, with piloting and evaluation undertaken to 2015.

Te Aka Taiwhenua Strategic Framework outlines DIA's commitment towards Te Tiriti o Waitangi. The framework is underpinned by the following mātaḡpono that guide DIA's work:

- **Whanaungatanga:** A relationship through shared experiences and working together which provides people with a sense of belonging.
- **Manaakitanga:** Hospitality, kindness, generosity, support, the process of showing respect, and care for others.
- **Kotahitanga:** Unity, togetherness, solidarity, collective actions.
- **He Tangata:** It is the people, it is the people, it is the people.

Te Tiriti has become more central as the programmes have progressed and with the exploration of hapū-led development.



Whananāki

Background to Whananāki CLDP

Whananāki is situated on the east coast of Northland, around 35 minutes north-east of Whangarei. The area was reputedly named by Puhī, the captain of the Mātaatua waka. In te reo Māori Whananāki means "kicking", and the name arose because mosquitoes caused Puhī to sleep restlessly.⁴

Whananāki marae is located in Whananāki, near Opuawhanga. It belongs to the hapū of Te Whānau Whero and Ngāti Rehua, who affiliate to the iwi Ngāti Wai. The wharenuī is named Whakapaumahara. Whananāki marae connects to the maunga Onekainga and to Te Wairahi River.

Te Wairahi Stream flows from the northwest into Whananāki Inlet, a wide tidal estuary which separates Whananāki from Whananāki South. A mangrove ecosystem in the estuary is home to many species of birds, fish and marine creatures. The longest footbridge in the Southern Hemisphere connects Whananāki North and Whananāki South.

Whananāki is a small community enjoyed by fewer than 1000 locals who frequently refer to it as "paradise on earth". The population more than triples in summer, with holidaymakers flocking to holiday in baches, cabins, lodges or one of the numerous beautiful campgrounds. Whananāki also lies on the Te Araroa hiking trail. The local school was opened in 1887 and is a coeducational full primary (years 1–8) school with a roll of around 30 students.

Historically, local residents make a distinction between the largely non-Māori community along the beach and estuary – referred to as 'the beach' (or 'the coast') – and the largely Māori community at Te Wairahi referred to as 'the valley'. Both areas are on the northern side of the estuary.

⁴ <https://teara.govt.nz/en/whangarei-tribes/page-1>

Identifying aspirations

The project

Whananāki was one of the first intake of communities into CLDP after the initial pilot phase, and was established in 2017. Whananāki's adoption of community-led development approaches, sitting alongside mātauranga Māori and an indigenous lens, firmly shaped their vision for a "culturally connected caring community."

Engaging broadly to understand community context and develop aspirations

The opportunity to engage with CLDP was recognised early on as a way to put aside years of "us and them" and come together to ensure the environmental, economic, social and cultural wellbeing of Whananāki.

Pam Armstrong, a passionate community Rangatira, led the way and brought the community together to discuss CLDP and explore aspirations. Through several hui at Whakapaumahara marae and the community hall, people were encouraged to identify the strengths, knowledge and skills within the community. It was a strengths-based space that enabled people to start with the positive aspects of the community, no matter where they were living in Whananāki.

When I first heard about it, I was really keen to be involved because I understood it to be a group that wanted to do projects within the community and their focus would be on including the community and bringing the community together and those sort of things that are dear to my heart. (Community leadership)

Reflecting on that time, kaumatua shared that the community was divided but through the hui and Pam's inspiration, people were in the room talking together for the first time. Through sharing experiences and knowledge of the community, people realised they all wanted the best for the community and that the perceived differences between them were not as significant.



I feel like it could have been a lack of understanding of Māori but I think in the end, because we're in this beautiful place Whananāki, [where] everyone here just loves this place, the water, the moana, and that's something we see eye to eye [on]. And with [that] we can work together because we all have something in common. (Community leadership)

The community hui was a safe space for community members to share moemoeā (dreams) and have robust conversations. Evaluation participants remembered hearing how locals had not been to the marae before, even though they had lived there their whole lives.

We had a kōrero around that and it actually came out [they] did really want to come up here and join in, bring their kids [but thought] they might be told, no you can't do that. And it was quite interesting, cos we're not a whānau like that. Whoever comes to our marae, is welcome. I really felt sort of pouri when I heard that. (Kaumātua)

From the kōrero a Path Plan was developed. Community-led development principles and mātauranga Māori were integrated to shape the vision and mission statements. The vision statement encompassed the purpose of the Whananāki CLD - **a culturally connected caring community**, while the mission statement **Te Hoe o te Waka – to paddle swiftly and in the right direction**, outlined the ways of working together.

Following the hui, the community lodged an expression of interest with the Department, at which point a Hāpai Hapori advisor became involved.

Involving mana whenua supported the partnership approach

The intention behind the initial community engagement hui was to build and strengthen connections and relationships between mana whenua and the wider community. Hui were held at the marae and mana whenua guided the partnership using tikanga Māori principles, whakawhanaungatanga, manaakitanga, aroha and whakaponu. Being able to meet in space that resonated with Māori offered an opportunity to stand in their mana motuhake and identify what they felt was important; their moemoeā for the community and themselves. It also provided an opportunity to share marae tikanga and kawa.

I think it's about us too having the opportunity to sort of determine our own rangatiratanga, to be able to meet and greet and be in spaces that we feel comfortable in. (Community member)

Whananāki aspirations focus on a sustainable future

Working towards a sustainable future is critical for Whananāki and four key goals guide overall direction:

- Protecting the environment – biodiversity, clean water, mara kai, rongoā, flora and fauna, food forests, art walkways
- Economic development – social enterprise, ecotourism, training (in Wairahi many young people move away to find work, large unemployed base or retirees)
- Cultural connectedness – marae transformation, te reo me nga tikanga (many people had never been to marae, an invisible divide)
- Social outcomes – better access to health services, recreation activities, arts and workshops and social enterprise

Staged development helped to realise aspirations

Throughout the course of the partnership, Whananāki CLD leadership have stayed true to the four areas of community aspirations noted above.

The approach to realising the community aspirations was encapsulated by Pam Armstrong in a presentation “start small think big”. Development of lofty aspirations help to build excitement and interest, and the Path planning enabled people to get involved and share what was important to them and Whananāki. Ideas were researched, tested, refined, trimmed back and then broken into smaller tasks and activities – a staged approach.

As shared by the community, some projects progressed very quickly while others took much more time. What is apparent to the CLD leadership roopu is that the community determined the pace of the projects and where energy and attention is directed. There were quick wins like solar installation in the Fire Emergency Services and Community Hall. These projects were significant milestones and created energy and vigour amongst the community.

As the community works towards reaching the outcomes, there are ebbs and flows as different areas become the focus and priority. However, the vision



statement - a culturally connected, caring community – continues to anchor the CLD project work.

We had some quite big kaupapa that were the main drivers for our CLD and I guess the fauna and flora were one of the main ones. I think at the beginning there was a clear position discussed or put in place that going forward it was always going to be about the people and the environment. From that came the big ideas and then from the big ideas we broke it down into CLD initiatives. (Community leadership)

Supporting transformational change

The CLDP partnership has been critical to supporting the Whananāki community as they “paddle” towards their aspirations. With the ongoing support from the CLDP advisor and funding, the partnership has led to many tangible changes in the community, including flora and fauna restoration, development of a native nursery, installations of solar panels and the erection of a Pou carving (see below in Table 1).

CLD activated the community by focusing on taiao activities of reestablishing mara kai, restoring waterways, weed eradication; and rangatahi projects of rongoā social enterprise and digital story telling.

It was just nice to know that there was community there behind our whānau for that big event and they knew it was important to us and took that on board. And also we've had like two Matariki days since then that they've supported well and come along to and again help with cooking in the kitchen, having little kōrero about things, sharing their expertise in areas, it's really cool and sharing it out to the rest of the community to come along. (Rangatahi)

Community members shared how the CLD projects helped them to reconnect with people and the environment after moving back to the area, while those who have had to move outside of the community can still stay connected. The projects have also provided a way for people to give back to a community they care very deeply about.

My history with Whananāki is I lived here as a child in the '50s. I came back 20 years later as a solo mother. I lived here for 36 and then really, really sadly I had to shift to town and but I'm still very involved in the community [through CLD]. (Community leadership)

The Native Nursery project is good example of different parts of the community consistently working together. Located on marae grounds, the nursery is now home to a community mara kai and orchard trees. It is seen as a valuable food source for everyone.

[The mara kai] is producing kai for the marae for us, the people, for everyone in the community. Healthy kai, it's beautiful. Being able to live off our garden that's been one big bonus for us here. This is what the CLD has helped us do that. (Kaumatua)

Given the nursery's location it has also encouraged community to become involved in the redevelopment of Whakapaumahara marae grounds. While CLD provided a small pūtea to support the work at the marae, what has been more significant is the number of people that have turned out to help throughout the restoration.

The CLD gave money to support [work on the marae] but also they were just there to support us like hands on deck... they were just always reassuring, their awahi around that time for our whānau and at working bees, like they were present with kai for our working bees. (Marae Trustee)

Table 1: Examples of Whananāki CLDP Projects and Outcomes

Project area	Activities	Outcomes
Flora and Fauna	Restoration of biodiversity in North and Whananāki South Road Coordination of animal and plant pest control Establish a Kiwi Zone with free Public Dog Kiwi aversion training Kiwi education day at local school	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Helps to build a resilient eco system • Increased awareness of taiao and people are able to get involved and feel useful • Stronger sense of responsibility and ownership among the community as kaitiaki of the whenua
Rangatahi	Youth Social Enterprise <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • After school and marae wānanga • Market research, test concepts, develop products, marketing and sales • Focus on rongoā products which ties into environment kawakawa balm Digital story telling with an intergenerational focus Capturing stories from the elderly community, focusing on key features of the community like the footbridge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public viewing of the video in the hall built a sense of pride • Rangatahi have a sense of purpose and accomplishment • Technical skills - use of iMac and cameras • The digital story telling created excitement in the community and those involved felt affirmed and valued
Pou installation	Contemporary carved Pou representing whakapapa and pūrakau of rohe	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Created a better understanding of the rohe • A physical symbol of a culturally connected and caring community
Native nursery	Development of a native nursery offering employment and training opportunities. Development of mara kai, wetlands and waterway reclamation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Land is productive and enjoyed by community • Pride of place and a healthy space to connect • Fish in the stream for first time in years • Staff employed, including rangatahi
Solar panel installations	Solar panels installed at Whananāki emergency centre and beach hall	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More aware of sustainable energy and clean water issues • Long term financial gain • Warmer, comfortable spaces for community groups

Sustained impact and benefits

Relational approaches are essential

There are some enduring impacts in the community from the CLD partnership, and some physical assets for all to share and experience: the Native Nursery, Community mara kai, and Marae transformation. Long lasting intangible outcomes are also significant, as are the established ways of working.

The collaborations and alliances developed through the CLD partnership serve as an essential framework for achieving sustainability. Central to this approach is the ability to navigate relationships and partnerships towards common goals, including those of the partners involved. It involves reaching out to potential collaborators where there is synergy, such as the Department of Conservation's Jobs for Nature initiative. Despite challenges arising from the busyness of people's lives, maintaining the momentum and keeping doors open remains crucial. Rather than giving up on projects that may have faced setbacks, the focus is on learning and adaptation within the broader context of the project's goals.

There is an ongoing commitment to achieving community aspirations

Another critical aspect of the exiting of CLDP funding was setting up Te Whana o Nanaaki Charitable Trust, as a way to continue to develop strategies for sustainability and ensure financial accountability. Prior to this, Ngā Manga Pūriri had managed the CLD finances. This changeover marked a crucial step towards organisational sustainability and the need for CLD leadership to strategically position themselves. The CLD leadership roopu continues to meet regularly although smaller in number. It is a strong platform to respond to any emerging needs and challenges of community. Most roopu members wear "several pōtae" representing different parts of the community, including library committee, ratepayers associations, school board, civil defence and marae.

As a result of their deeper familiarity and understanding, CLD community members are now engaging in meaningful dialogue and facilitating robust conversations. Efforts persist to actively involve the wider community, recognising the connection between community engagement and project success. While participation levels may vary, with some initiatives drawing in

only a few individuals and others attracting larger groups, the emphasis remains on consistently extending invitations and providing opportunities for community engagement.

They are actively engaged in various community initiatives contributing to the Civil Defence plan, organising community events and participating in meetings, such as the Ratepayers gatherings, where they can discuss CLD practices and activities. Furthermore, they are currently strengthening the Whananāki CLD strategic plan, and engaging with the community. Central to this plan the continued development of the Community Hub and broader community outcomes.

The Community Hub which is at the stage of attracting funding to start building is one such project that will need the support of the wider community. The hub is seen as a platform for sharing the rich cultural heritage and stories of Whananāki. Additionally, creating spaces within the hub for rangatahi activities, conferences, food and refreshments and local art gallery will cater to the needs of community and visitors.

Once that Hub is developed, we feel like we could do more little things like that. We could do little rangatahi days in the holidays, little activities that could just run for the morning and that would bring more of the community together and maintain these relationships that we're talking about, that we've I guess mended. It's now about maintaining that sense of community between people. (Community member)

Enhancing wellbeing of the community and hapū

From the perspective of the community the CLD partnership has contributed to the wellbeing of its members. It has fostered inclusivity and help to amplify voices, particularly those of Māori and hapū members.

Wellbeing creation for Te Whana o Nanaaki CLD is centred around principles of:

- **Kotahitanga** – collaborative ways of working that support synergistic outcomes for all



- **Rangatiratanga** - offering opportunities at an individual and collective level to participate in decision making and the right to exercise agency
- **Manaakitanga** - inclusive approach that supports people and expressions of mutual respect and reciprocity
- **Whanaungatanga** – through a relational approach finding connection and a sense of belonging
- **Kaitiakitanga** – protecting and nurturing people and the environment strengthening emotional, cultural, physical, and spiritual connections within the community.

As one community member shared, being part of CLD holds personal significance in ensuring that the community's diverse perspectives are heard and valued. The inclusive nature of the CLD Committee has been particularly notable, creating a space where everyone feels welcome and involved.

I didn't grow up here but I came up here every holidays, all summer, camp a lot so it's cool that there's something like this that's going to pull those connections together; the community that are from here but also community that are actually living here. (Community member)

Realising aspirations

Through shared understanding relationships have strengthened

The Whananāki CLD vision is a culturally connected caring community. Fundamental to this is improving knowledge amongst community members to support a better understanding of each other. Through CLD, the community have been able to target projects that have increased intergenerational understanding, tikanga Māori knowledge, and opportunities for different parts of the community to come together.

A significant change has been improved relationships between Māori and non-Māori – the valley and beach communities. While some divisions still persist, the community is now significantly more interconnected, and community members reflected that there is less division in the community as a direct result of the CLDP partnership. People who had never previously visited the marae began attending meetings held there, gradually eroding the barriers between different segments of the community. As the project progressed, it

became evident that for some attendees, it marked their inaugural experience setting foot on the marae grounds, despite having grown up in the vicinity.

In 10 years we've made that step to come together, to join up our community, and to bring them on board with us, [to] get them involved with what's happening up here and for us too, to get ourselves involved [with] what's happening down there. So it's actually been a good thing for us and at this time it's working. (Kaumatua)

And I do think because of the CLD they really value the marae and points of view of whānau... And now they are quite respectful because of CLD achievements but also achievement of the hapū that has brought the marae to where it is today, from looking that way to looking this way. (Community member)

Authentic shared leadership has developed

Positive leadership has emerged from within the community, and as the partnership has progressed, individuals involved in multiple community groups have helped to bridge the gap and facilitate understanding and collaboration. The CLD coordinator role has been pivotal. Deeply rooted in Whananāki, with intimate knowledge of the community and extensive experience in community work, he has been able to build respect and trust from all sides. His leadership has played a crucial role in strengthening community connections and promoting the CLDP principles within Whananāki.

The CLD partnership aligned with expressions of sovereignty and self-determination for the community. It was a mana-enhancing process that supported the right of mana whenua to participate in decision making. Rangatira a hapū provided mindful advice and direction, ensuring that processes remained tika and pono. Kaumatua on the CLD leadership roopu have been able to settle challenges and provide reassurance to the hapū and community.



Challenges post funding

The absence of a steady stream of funding has necessitated a re-evaluation of priorities and a more cautious approach to making commitments. Despite ongoing efforts to support existing community initiatives, there is a recognition of the need to scale back and refocus efforts in the face of limited resources. Moreover, succession planning and nurturing new leadership to sustain the initiative's legacy is important. The transition to a volunteer-based model has underscored the difficulties in accessing funds and resources, despite the wealth of knowledge and potential partnerships available within the group.

To overcome these challenges, community members spoke about the need for future opportunities to explore innovative fundraising ideas, aligning with various funding streams, and the development of community funding calendar. This is indicative of the group's resilience and determination to navigate the post-funding landscape.

Conclusion

In the minds of community members who have been involved in CLD, it has built a stronger sense of community and provided “a bridge for people to come together”. The sense of collective benefit is evident and it appears that the initiatives have been or will be of benefit in the future to the community of Whananāki. A recurring theme in conversations across the community is a shared desire for the success of this kaupapa. There is a notable absence of pessimism or concerns about failure; instead, discussions continued to be focused on the progress and sustainability of initiatives like the nursery. Even in uncertain times, the focus remains on the advancement of the aspirations and vision - a culturally connected caring community.

One of the common connections when listening to others right across the community is they want this kaupapa to be a success. There's not a negative word around failing as sorts, it's always what's happening with the nursery, do you think he's set, what's happening, what's kind of, are you hoping it's going to survive for the rest of the year. We will always be maintaining the bridge, I call it. We can't say we've successfully built a bridge, we will just keep mending it and maintaining it because the people will come and go. (Community leadership)

