

ACT'S THEORY OF CHANGE

It is increasingly recognised that a basic prerequisite for planning for change and bringing about results is to articulate a Theory of Change (ToC) to guide the development and implementation of one's strategy. A good ToC will identify the salient features of the context of intervention, the preconditions for success, the possible pathways for success and the assumptions underpinning the strategy.

PLANNED RESULTS

The overall all goal of AcT is to “contribute to the MDGs through ensuring that citizens are increasingly able to claim and exercise their rights as citizens.” The purpose is to “increase the accountability and responsiveness of government to its citizens...” and the programme seeks to achieve this through four outputs:

- 1 **Citizens access to information improved.**
- 2 **CSO engagement in policy and budget formulation processes at the local and national levels increased.**
- 3 **Strengthened CSO monitoring of service delivery and public resource management.**
- 4 **Improved understanding by civil society of what works in strengthening accountability and fighting corruption**

AcT invites concept notes, or Ideas for Change, from CSOs that work in the area of accountability, and works with the organisations that are selected to strengthen their approaches. The area in which most support has been focused has been strengthening of the political economy analysis informing the partners' strategies, and to build strong M&E systems, usually through the application of Outcome Mapping.

THE ANALYTICAL BASIS OF THE TOC

AcT's Theory of Change is based on a recognition that making changes in accountability systems is primarily a political process, where technical factors may be relevant, but more as facilitating than causing change. This view of change as a political process fits well with a programme that supports civil society to engage in activities to strengthen accountability.

AcT's approach is informed by the political economy of Tanzania, where relatively well defined and limited elite exert control over the political and economic spheres. They use this control to extract rents, which they in turn use to maintain and consolidate control. Exhibiting a high, if diminishing, degree of donor dependence, the elite is also adept at producing and delivering policies and reforms to demonstrate to voters and Development Partners that they are committed to delivering the MDGs, but there is often a large gap between paper policies and what is actually implemented on the ground.

AcT's ToC is based on the premise that by mobilising public pressure for change, the incentives for some decision makers and persons with influence will shift from resisting change to favouring it. Likewise, by enabling citizens to influence decision makers, they themselves become influential. CSOs influence change by engaging directly with decision makers, or by supporting or facilitating citizens to mobilise for change, through collective action or as individuals.

AcT is wary of commonly accepted assumptions, such as that improved access to information, public awareness and a strengthened policy and legal framework necessarily *in and of themselves* lead to stronger accountability and improved service delivery. AcT recognises that there is relatively weak evidence of the impact that support to the demand side of accountability has had since the emergence of the governance

agenda over the last two decades. There are numerous documented cases of courageous and effective individual and collective action in Tanzania over this period, but it is also clear that large amounts of human and material resources have been expended with little demonstrable effect and that there are also cases where support to CSOs may have weakened accountability and bolstered existing power structures rather than shifting power.¹

AcT also recognises that change is based on complex and non-linear processes which unfold over, sometimes long, periods of time. Because one cannot assume that any particular action will necessarily have any particular effect (e.g. availability of evidence showing why change is desirable being likely to persuade policy makers to push for change, or that availability of information will lead to strengthened accountability which in turn will bring about improved services) it is important that actions and the impact they have on relevant stakeholders and their behaviours and practices are systematically monitored and documented. This not only enables AcT and its partners to demonstrate impact, but also supports learning of what has worked and what has not.

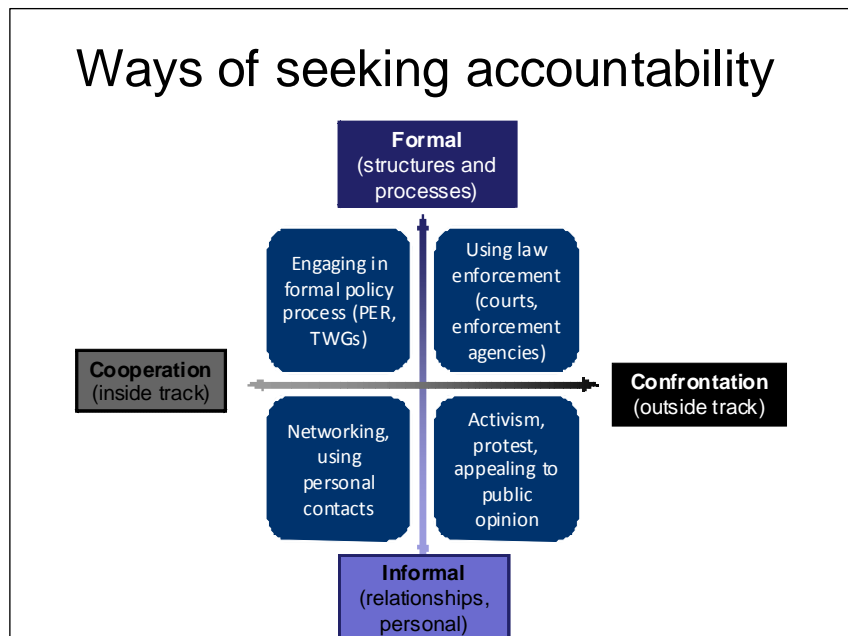
Supporting and generating learning is the glue that binds AcT's ToC together. AcT's supports learning by assisting partners to build solid systems of monitoring and documentation, and by facilitating exchange of experiences for mutual learning between partners. AcT also conducts its own political economy analysis within the programme and in partnership with CSO partners.

PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

The diagram below provides an analytical depiction of available CSO strategies for seeking accountability. Horizontally, it distinguishes between an *inside track*, where CSOs seek to work within the system of authority to influence change, and an *outside track*, where CSOs take a more confrontational approach to challenge the system. Vertically, it distinguishes between *formal processes*, where CSOs operate according to the formal system, and *informal processes*, where CSOs engage on a personal level with policy makers or citizens.

This produces a useful analytical definition of four spheres of activities for actors seeking to influence stronger accountability:

- 1 **Engaging in formal policy processes**, such as sector working groups and technical reviews, CSOs can seek to use evidence to influence the policy processes. Although the experience of using sector reviews, for example, has at best been mixed so far, this might be more effective if better combined with the other approaches presented in this diagram.



¹ See AcT's political economy analysis, *Politics and Change*.

- 2 **Using law enforcement organs**, such as courts or other accountability institutions, CSOs can engage formal channels to enforce accountability. In particular the National Audit Office has started to work better, and there is considerable scope for CSOs to use audit reports to press for action from courts and the oversight committees in Parliament. There is also scope for increasing the effectiveness of seeking official action when such efforts are combined with public campaigns and effective lobbying of other decision makers.
- 3 **Networking and using personal contacts**, such as MPs or local politicians, CSOs can seek to engage the support of decision makers, possibly through demonstrating that the advocated change will generate popular support (or that not acting risks incurring public dissatisfaction). There is considerable scope for effective networking in the new Parliament, where there is both a historically strong opposition and a significant strong and vocal CCM backbench. More efforts could also be expended on political lobbying at the local level.
- 4 **Appealing directly to public opinion through activism and popular campaigns**, thus raising public pressure for change. This is increasingly becoming a standard component of all CSO strategies. It can be particularly effective if evidence and partnerships at the local level can be used to deliver messages at the national level. Effective activism depends to a large extent on the realisation of strong local-national links.

A good CSO strategy on accountability issues will probably cover elements of all these four quadrants – operating in different ways at different times according to a well informed understanding of the prevailing political economy and what has worked in leveraging change. Funding from AcT is provided in a flexible way to enable organisations to be ‘light on their feet’ in adapting to changing circumstances in order to bring about agreed higher level results.

The planning tools AcT has adopted are tailored to fit AcT’s role as a funder, who relies on its partners to achieve results. The logframe is built around outputs from partners, and the output indicators are designed to capture changes brought about by partners, whether in planning or budgeting, oversight or by influencing national debates. This is substantially different from the more conventional output indicators, such as numbers of workshops conducted, number of people awareness raised or numbers of publications disseminated.

Underpinning the logframe, is the adoption of Outcome Mapping, which enables the partner organisations to capture directly behaviour changes among targeted partners and decision makers. The Outcome Mapping instrument is better able to capture non-linear processes of change. AcT has also broken new ground by bringing the logframe and the Outcome Mapping approaches together into the a more complete logic model, as captured in the following section.

The Accountability in Tanzania Programme (AcT) is an initiative funded by UKaid from the Department of International Development. AcT seeks to work with civil society to strengthen their capacity to demand the delivery of quality services and efficient and accountable management of public resources.

To find out more please visit our website at www.accountability@or.tz