Think Piece: Working with Log-Frames and Outcome Mapping in the Context of the Accountability Tanzania Programme (AcT)

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1. Introduction

One of the attractive and innovative proposals offered by the consortium managing the AcT programme was its intention to use Outcome Mapping (OM) approaches with CSO partners. This reflects the well documented advantages of using OM in the following situations: when working in partnership, when building capacity, when a deeper understanding of social factors is critical, when influencing policy, and when tackling complex problems[2]. All of these are applicable to different aspects of the AcT programme. However, despite being advocated for as a 'realistic alternative'[3], the programme still needs to report to DFID using a conventional log-frame[4]. Further since AcT is supporting its partners overall strategic plans, rather than just their governance work, the partners are usually in a position of having to report to other donors. This reporting tends to use a logical framework based methodology, as well as using OM in their dialogue with AcT. This poses two challenges for the AcT programme, (a) how organise monitoring and evaluation within the programme in a way which both provides a clear picture of what partners are achieving, but which also provides the information which DFID requires for their log-frame (b) how to support partners in acquiring the benefits of OM in a way which supports their monitoring and lesson learning dialogue with other donors, as well as with AcT.

This note was originally drafted as a 'think piece' in August 2010 as an attempt to address those challenges, to serve as the basis of discussion and ultimately a shared approach to how the monitoring and evaluation can work in a complementary manner in different elements of the programme. It set out to review selected literature on the subject of the of managing the relationship between OM and logical frameworks (LF), and partly by drawing on my experience of working with results based approaches with bilateral donors and CSOs, both in Tanzania and beyond. It has been updated in the light of subsequent discussions and decisions, to reflect the approach currently being adopted by AcT. The intended audience is those working on the AcT programme, as well as others outside the programme who are working through similar issues.

[1] With sincere thanks to Geir Sundet and Steve Bertram for comments on an earlier draft of this paper.
[2] Harry Jones and Simon Hearn (2009) Outcome Mapping: a realistic alternative for planning, monitoring and evaluation. ODI Background Note.
[3] ibid
[4] DFID (2009)Guidance on Using the Revised Logical Framework. DFID How to Note.

2. Differences between LF and OM approaches.

At one level OM and LF approaches can be conceptualised as being totally distinct, based on different perceptions about the nature of social change and how it is brought about. 'LFA (in the way it is usually practised) views changed, in the form of 'outcome' and 'impact', as a linear, predictable, measurable and straightforward 'logical' relationship between a programme and the change it wishes to effect'[5]. A typical results chain would hence be:

Input – Process – Ouput – Outcome – Impact

In practical terms this could be:

Results Chain	Input	Process	Output	Outcome	Impact
Example	Funding	Improvement in strategic planning	More Schools Built	Increased enrolment	Increased literacy

Reporting on LF approaches tends to imply providing evidence that a particular programme or project has brought about sustainable improvements in the well-being of targeted beneficiaries, and attributing this to the actions of the programme or project. The positive implications are clarity in programming, and an ease in communicating, especially for accountability purposes of what the programme is doing.

To take an example from DFID's own work on voice and accountability[6]:

Results Chain	Input	Process	Output	Voice and Accountability Output	Outcome	Impact
Example	Funding	Supporting legislative change	Legislation passed	Effective implementation of legislation	Electoral systems functioning effectively	Voice and Accountability facilitated

The challenges of this approach are at least three fold:

[5] MDF (2007) Outcome Mapping and Logical Framework Analysis. Note on the occasion of the first Outcome Mapping course by MDF 18-20 September 2007 in Ede

[6] Social Development Direct (2009) Measuring Change and Results in Voice and Accountability Work, DFID working Paper 34, December 2009. This example is cited from page 12. In the original, several potentially complementary results are given for the output and outcome levels, but only one is used here for simplicity.

- The LF provides no explicit theory or change or explanation of how or why outcome and impact occur, which presents challenges in terms of how to support the desired changes. The further along the results chain, the less control the programme has over the achievement of results, because more and more is under the control and influence of local players in the local context. This again has significant bearing on understanding the who and the how of achieving results, though the risk and assumptions column gives a broad indication of the programme's thinking.
- Too much is left unexplained - there is 'many a slip between cup and lip' in terms of supporting legislative change and the passing of legislation, between the passing of legislation its effective implementation and so on – a cursory glance at for example the progress of the Children's Act in Tanzania would substantiate this[7]. In conventional LF approaches these would be left to the 'risks and assumptions' column – which in my experience is the least-understood and least effectively used part of a log-frame by many CSOs.
- It has tended to result in a 'bureaucratization of programming', with strong emphasis on plans, budgets and accounts, and 'the belief among managers that appropriately updated planning and reporting documents greatly improve the quality of development projects, as well as enhancing the role of the managers in achievement of results'[8].

These observed challenges, are in a sense, the starting point for OM approaches. For outcome mapping the outcomes are seen primarily as changes in behaviour towards the achievement of a common goal – Who has to do what differently in terms of behaviour, attitudes, and so on in order to bring about a result? It seeks to understand the ways in which organisations contribute to change rather than focussing on issues of attribution through a linear model. Outcome mapping accepts that the programme can only influence change in 'boundary partners', which are those with whom the programme interacts directly. It then seeks to link measurement of results to the changing behaviour of those partners and uses progress markers as indicators for tracking the logic of the intended behaviour changes. It acknowledges that partners operate within different logic and accountability systems, and that multiple and non-linear events and factors (social, cultural, environmental, political, economic etc) contribute to the bringing about of change.

At this level, the complications of trying to marry the two approaches seem substantial; some OM 'purists' would reject the idea of even trying to, because their fundamental premises are so different. In practical terms, however, there is a need to do so – in the context of AcT for reporting to DFID using a log-frame, and for AcT's CSO partners to obtain some of the advantages of conceptualising their work using an OM approach, whilst still reporting to their other donors who have a LF based reporting system. The next section briefly reviews some of the attempts to marry OM and LF to date.

[7] See for example Masuma Mamdani et al (2009) Influencing Policy for Children in Tanzania: Lessons from Education, Legislation and Social Protection, REPOA Special Paper 09.30
[8] MDF op cit page 2.

3. Combining LF and OM approaches

Several practitioners have attempted to combine LF and OM approaches. The OM website is an excellent and on-going source of information and shared experiences for this. Three different approaches are summarised here, with reference also to the AcT context, before in the final section putting forward a possible mechanism for conceptualising the M&E of the AcT programme.

3.1 MDF

In the MDF paper cited earlier, the combining is made easier by specifying particular approaches to the use of LF[9]:

- That the LF is used in the context of a 'learning organisation', implying flexibility in adapting to changes in the external environment throughout the programme management cycle. In practical terms there are clear limits to the kinds of changes that DFID is able to accept in the log-frame once formally approved at the highest level of the organisation.
- The LF is produced using a participatory approach involving 'all possible stakeholders'. Given the range of CSO partners, and given they are not coming on-board at the start of the process or even at the same time, it is hard for them to share a 'problem analysis' as the foundation of the LF, and impossible in the context of a challenge fund.
- It has to be acknowledged that outputs (goods and services provided by the programme) don't necessarily generate outcomes (reaction of beneficiaries to the goods and services) even when all stakeholders have been involved in agreeing outcomes at the outset of the process. Lots of other factors come into play, which are the risks and assumptions. The programme has to be able to manage these, where possible – but as with bullet point 1 above, there is limited flexibility in changing the higher level results of the log-frame once approved.
- Impact is not seen as the linear logical achievement of everything else in the LF – many other factors contribute. Fortunately the DFID LF does acknowledge this point, as the goal level currently refers to 'contribution' to the achievement of MDGs in Tanzania.

With these caveats, MDF suggests that if results at outcome level are understood as the effect of the behaviour change of boundary partners, and if progress markets are used to make that change evident and measurable, then OM could be a flexible part of LF[10]. However, MDF stresses 'it is not recommended to translate OM terminology directly into LFA terminology and viceversa, since the terms have different meanings in each of the paradigms.'

Nevertheless, the MDF argument does suggest that there are indeed ways of adapting the two approaches, particularly when one of the results which are central to the LF are the changes in behaviour of the boundary partners.

3.2 Social Framework Approach[11]

A social framework can be described as follows:

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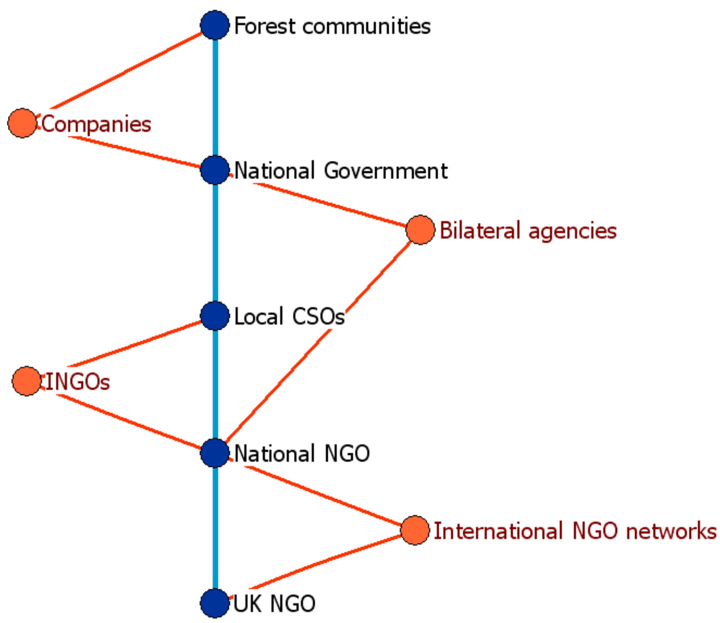
[9] Ibid page 4.

[10] Ibid page 6

[11] Accessed from Monitoring and Evaluation News website.

- A format for describing an expected pathway of influence through a wider network of people groups or organisations
- Is a logical framework re-designed as if people and their relationships mattered
- Is a way of summarising the theory of change within a development project, in a form which can be monitored and evaluated, and in a way which can be explained to others.

It uses the idea of pathways to link the linear development model of LF and a network view in which change can be taking place simultaneously in many different locations and in many different relationships. The website provides an example of such a network:



It then goes on to show how the changing relationships can be tracked using a format similar to a log-frame:

Expected changes (objectives)	Objectively Verifiable Indicators (OVIs)	Means of Verification (MOVs)	Assumptions
Local Forest communities will…			
National government will			
Local CSOs will			
The National NGOs will			
The UK NGO will…			

The merits of this approach include:

- moving away from the linear and time-bound results chain of conventional LF in which it can sometimes be quite difficult to place in the correct box the difference between for example outcome and impact. It does this by focussing on the changes brought about by different actors;
- the approach captures behaviour change and hence provide clarity on how changes can be brought about;
- there is the flexibility for the chain to be as long or as short as is helpful in the context of a particular project;
- accountability is distributed, meaning that responsibility for the functioning of the chain is shared amongst different actors in the pathway – in a conventional LF approach responsibility lies primarily with the programme managers, but (as indicated above) their control at the higher end (outcome and impact) is increasingly limited.

The challenge of this approach is how it addresses cause and effect, and how this framework can be mapped onto the kind of LF that DFID is using.

3.3 'Conceptual Fusion'[12]

The Ambrose and Roduner paper is useful not least as it contextualises the need to form a fusion between LF and OM in current modalities of aid and cooperation – which is very much where AcT is situated. They argue that an OM-LFA fusion makes sense under the following circumstances, all of which obtain with AcT:

'Why does the use of an OM-LFA fusion make sense?

- A combination of focuses serves different users and uses: clear result areas and ultimate results (LFA concept, mostly for accountability) and process on "how to get there" (OM concept, mostly for learning and program steering).

[12] Ambrose and Ruduner (2009) A conceptual Fusion of the logical framework approach and outcome mapping. OM Ideas, Paper No 1 May 2009

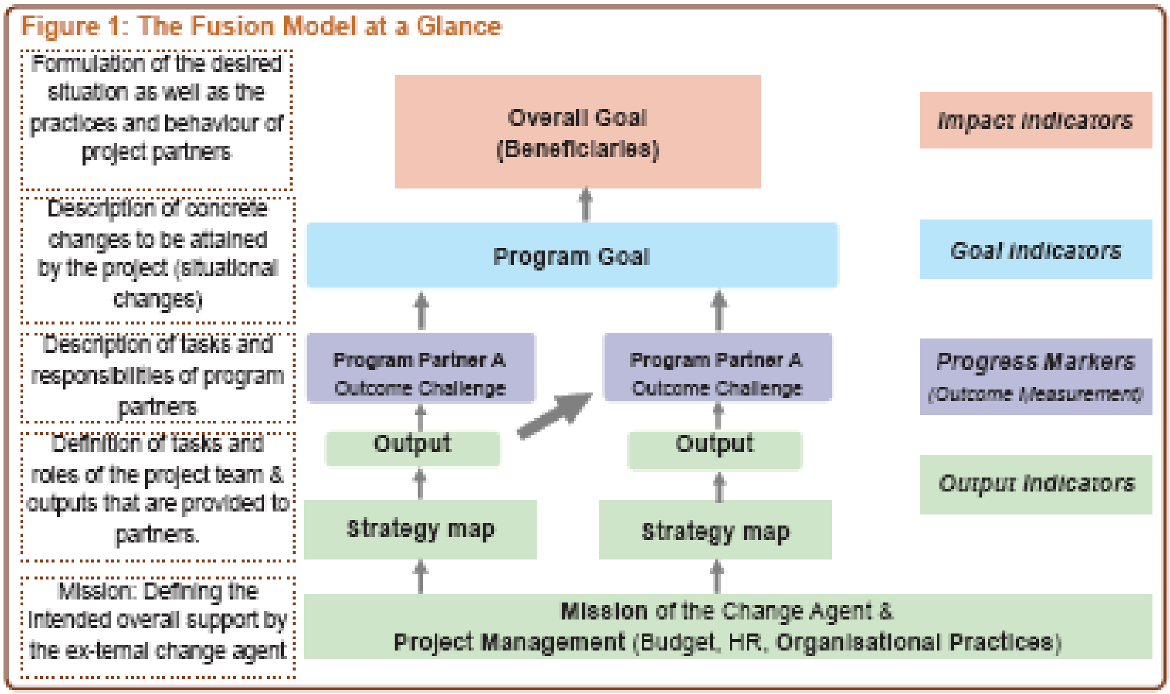
- Existing program frameworks (planned with OM or LFA) can be improved with simple adaptations.
- Concepts from both approaches can be used, where they add most value. Long term processes (i.e. advocacy work) can be tracked with OM; while service delivery from a program team can be planned and tracked with LFA methods.
- Progress markers for tracking social and behavioural change can be used for program steering and learning amongst programme partners, while quantitative indicators are most relevant for reporting.'[13]

They go on to argue that it makes sense to use the fusion when you need to harmonise the levels you are working with (such as ministerial and community levels), when you need information for various partners for different needs and accountabilities and when you want to improve the programme in an LFA environment – which they call the OM by stealth approach.[14]

The following diagram (next page) summarises their fusion model. Elements which are of use in AcT are:

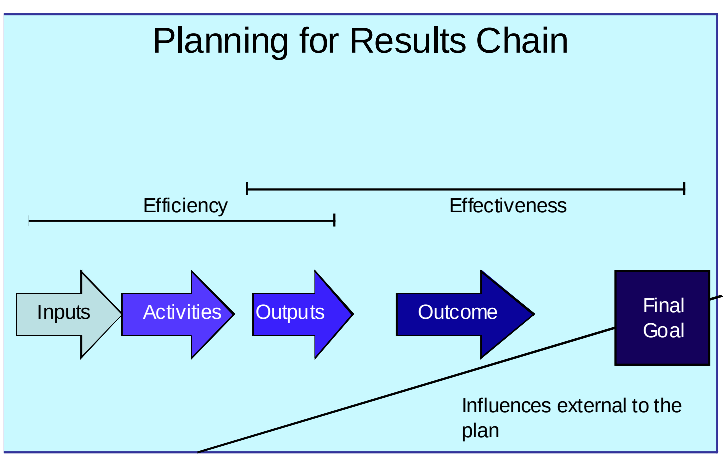
- Providing a visualisation of the whole programme so that different partners can see where their contribution fits.
- Making explicit that the achievement of project goals become the purpose of the behaviour changes of the boundary partners. It also implicitly endorses working with longer 'results chains' than the conventional four in a LF.
- Putting AcT's contribution into the diagram contributes the idea that AcT also needs to monitoring its input to CSO partners (financial, technical etc) and also the results that this achieves – whether CSO partners are becoming more efficient and effective in contributing to the achievement of overall programme results.

[13] Ibid page 2
[14] Ibid.



All of these are elements that AcT can usefully take forward in the M&E system it adopts. Ideally we should be building on such ideas but carrying them further forward into what the M&E framework would look like – beyond just the useful visualisation of the programme provided here. It is the intention of the next section to show how this could be done.

4. Possible Way Forward



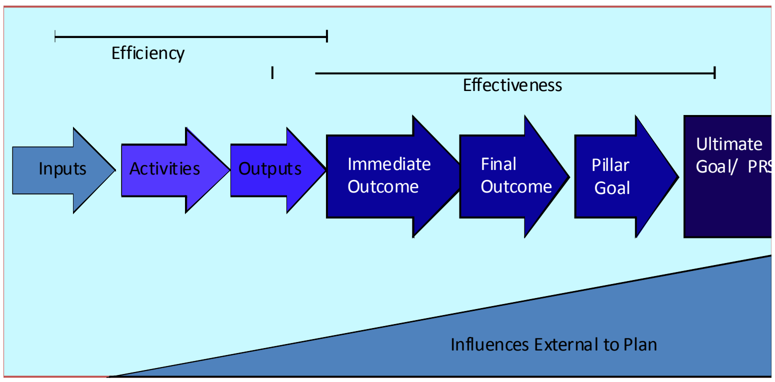
My ideas on this are a something of a work in progress, based on work I've done with logic models – supporting Irish Aid to develop a results based management approach to Country Strategy Papers[15], and supporting CSOs in Tanzania to work with a similar approach, by putting together a visualisation of their entire programme, before then representing which parts of that programme are currently funded by different donors (and also which parts are un-funded - potentially

[15] Irish Aid Department of Foreign Affairs (2009) A Results Based Management Approach to Country Strategy Papers

to the detriment to the organisation as a whole).

The key component is a flexible results chains. In particular, there is the value in longer results chains than the classic four summarised at the start of section 2 above. There can be as many as required by context and the complexity of the cause and effect relationship/s involved. The diagram here also shows the difference between efficiency and effectiveness and the argument that influences external to the plan don't just happen at the end of the results chain, they also reach back as far as the way in which the project/programme is able to convert inputs into outputs.

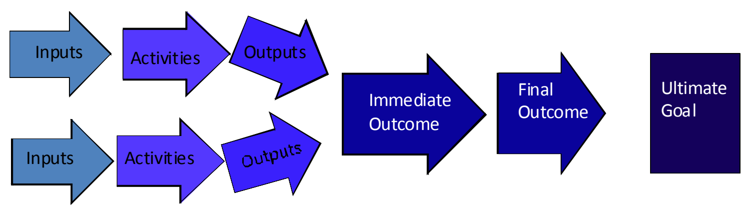
Another example…



In this second example, there are many more links in the chain (with different terminology which can be adapted according to how an institution wishes.

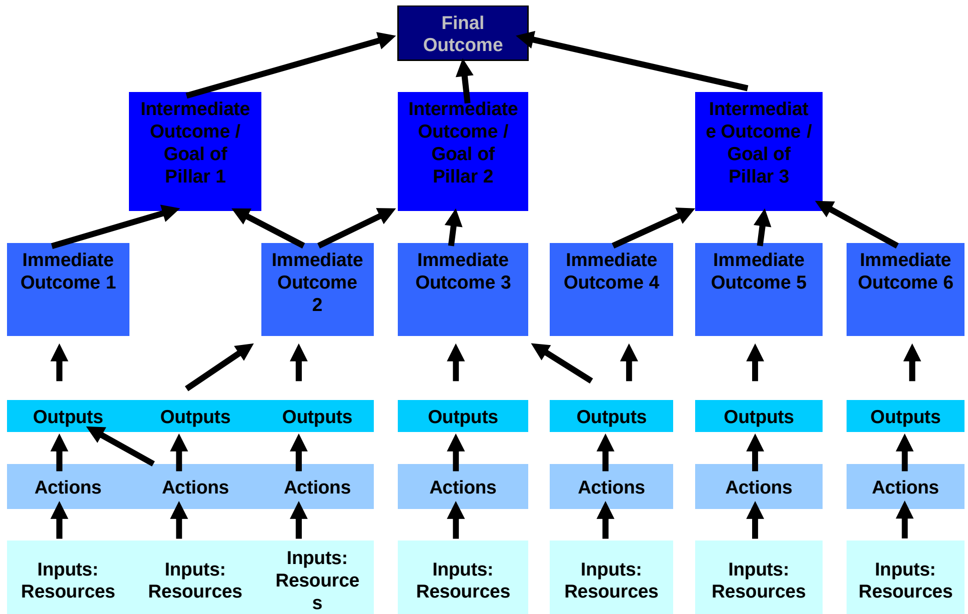
Another example…

This example shows how elements early on in a results chain can be combined to generate a shared outcome. Alternatively the same activity can generate more than one output /outcome. For example, training a school committee in its roles and responsibilities can have multiple benefits – both for education and for accountability. For example, learning outcomes can be improved if the school committees act upon their role in monitoring pupil and teacher absenteeism; accountability can be strengthened once school committee members understand their school's funding entitlements and how to track whether receipts at school level match disbursements from the district level.



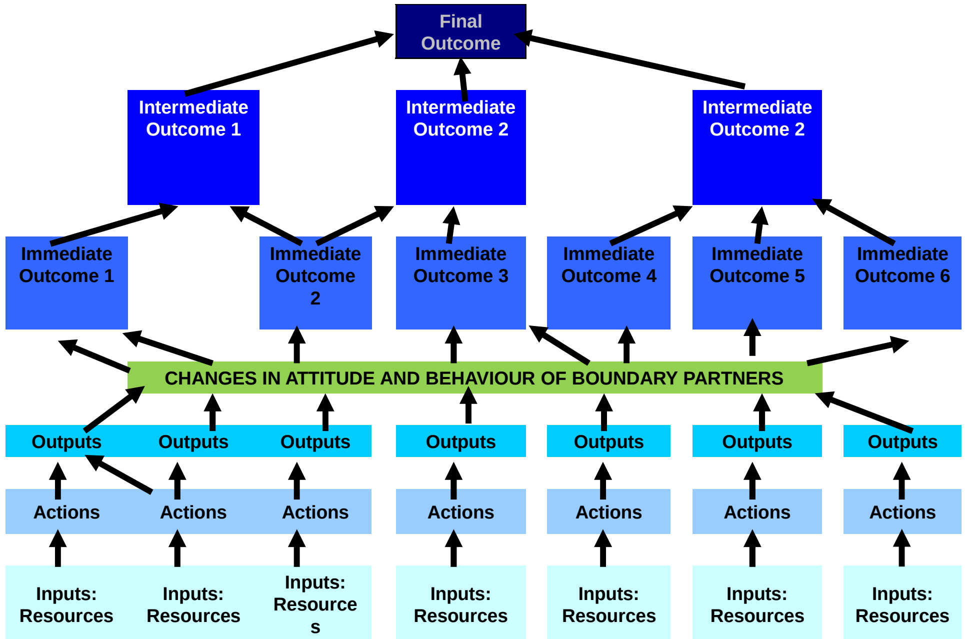
Aggregating up, the whole of a programme can be summarised on a single page. Organisations can be supported through a strategic planning process to articulate the cause and effect relationships between their actions and the achievement of final results / outcome/goal/impact (harmonisation of language is always a challenge here!). The diagram on the next page could be seen as a visualisation of the whole of

MKUKUTA with its different pillars – though obviously the results chains would have to be much longer to capture the strategic plans of each and every MDA.



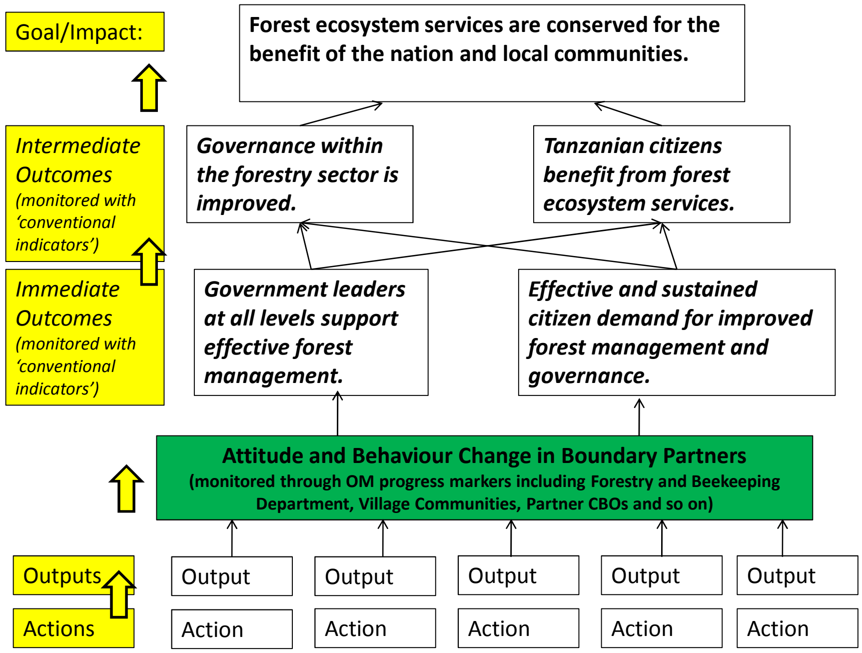
4.1 LF and OM for AcT Partners

Following on from the above, and the MDF insight (above) that results at outcome level are understood as the effects of changes in the behaviour of boundary partners, the following diagram shows where this behaviour change can be thought of in terms of a logic model.



This clearly still retains the limitations of suggesting, and indeed representing, a linear approach to change, but the model has worked well in supporting partners' clarity of thinking about the kinds of changes they are seeking to bring about[16]. The following example is taken from the work of Tanzania Forest Conservation Group / MJMITA. On the left hand side, in yellow, is shown a conventional results chain. The rest of the diagram is a logic model, showing in green where the focus on attitude and behaviour change.

[16] One of the limitations of an approach that puts undue emphasis on contribution as opposed to attribution for change is that it can be misunderstood to imply that making a contribution is sufficient – for example, that raising awareness on an issue is sufficient as an end in itself, rather than thinking through to the next level, that is, working to ensure that the increased awareness manifests itself in a change in behavior. In strengthening governance and accountability, it is essential that influence is given equal weighting to contribution, or the risk is that NGOs continue to be very busy with carrying out activities whose impact is unclear.



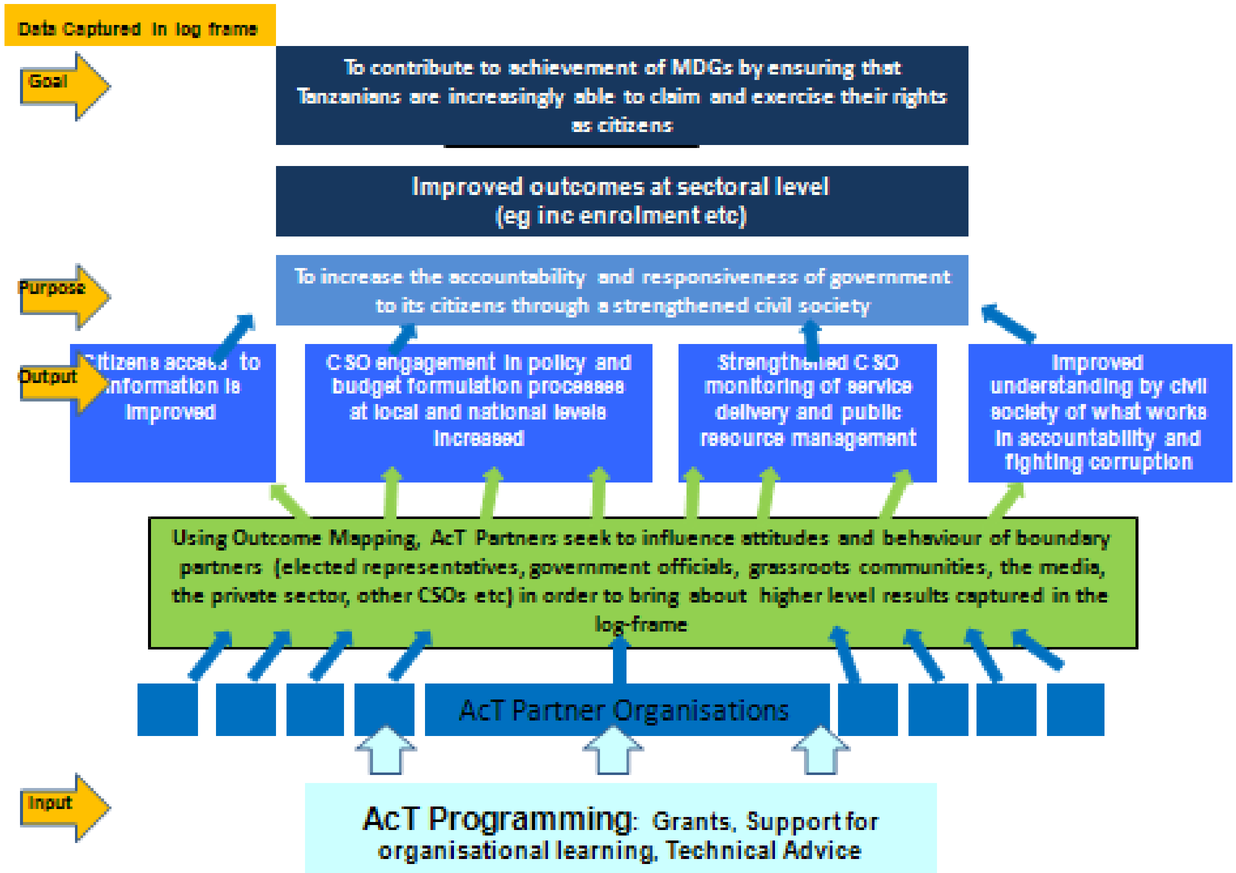
Example of a Partner Logic Model, showing the focus on Attitude and Behaviour Change (with thanks to TFCG/MJUMITA)

The higher level results have usually been defined by partners in terms of improvements in sector outcomes, though the kinds of changes in attitude and behaviour of boundary partners are strongly related to governance and accountability – including issues of transparency and information sharing, use of open and participatory processes, and accountability or budget and plan execution. This represents their thinking that improvements in governance and accountability are a means to an end rather than an end in themselves.

4.2 For AcT's own Reporting and Accountability.

This work with partners has contributed substantially to AcT's thinking about its own logic model and log-frame. Since the programme is focussed on demand side accountability it assumes continued work by Government and Development Partners on the necessary and complementary supply side reforms – covering for example access to information and citizen space to engage in policy and planning processes. It also takes as implicit improvements in sector outcomes as a result of improvements accountability and responsiveness.

An additional complication is that the AcT programme works through partners, and hence the outputs that are generated are not AcT outputs but rather those of the partners.



Logic Model of AcT Programme, showing both information captured in the log-frame, and the other elements of the work that is monitored

5. Next Steps

The next step is the **translation of a logic model into results frameworks** that could be used to provide the following information:

- An individual organisation's progress towards changing attitudes and behaviour – for which an outcome journal is used. These journals are primarily intended for organisational reflection and learning – and are complemented by the use of other classic OM journals, which track, and are then used for reflection on, strategies and on organisational effectiveness.
- Progress towards individual organisation outcomes, such as results at sector level, mainly using conventional indicators
- An individual organisation's baseline and progress with the indicators required by AcT in documenting the AcT outputs (ie towards improving access to information, engagement in policy and budget formulation, monitoring of service delivery)

A key element of the work of AcT is also learning – the fourth output is on CSO learning about what works in strengthening accountability and fighting corruption. Hence AcT also asks partners report on their outcome journals, as part of monitoring progress of individual organisations, but also with a view to promoting cross-learning between the various partners, which is promoted through targeted learning events, websites, informal link-ups and so on.

6. Conclusion

There is no easy fit between linear, results based management approaches and outcome mapping – in many ways they are practically and ideologically opposed to each other. However, pragmatically, it is necessary to try and bring them together , and a number of different organisations and individuals have tried to make sense of how to do this. AcT is making its contribution to this thinking – motivated both by supporting partner organisations to get the benefits of OM whilst still being able to report to other donors who have a results based management focus, and by its commitment to support OM, whilst reporting to DFID using a log-frame.

The solution we are applying is to work with logic models to emphasise the planning around higher level results, but more classic OM tools, of progress markers and journals to plan and report on the essential shifts in attitude and behaviour. At the time of writing, it remains a 'work in progress' for us to streamline the results frameworks and reporting requirements, to ensure they fulfil the primary need of promoting organisational learning towards greater effectiveness. It is a process of learning and development on all sides, and at all levels: for AcT Partners, for AcT as an organisation, and for our own donor, DFID.