



Terms of Reference for Research Study:

AcT's partnerships with CSOs: Is AcT helping CSO Partners to become more effective in achieving change?

1. Introduction

The Accountability in Tanzania Programme (AcT) is a DFID Tanzania initiative that seeks to strengthen governance and accountability in Tanzania through a strengthened civil society. Conceived as a 5 year programme, it will now run for 6 years from 2009 to 2015, and now also includes ring-fenced finance for governance and accountability issues linked to environment and climate change.

The NGO sector in Tanzania is burgeoning in terms of numbers, but faces many challenges including having largely ineffective connection to broader civil society such as faith-based organisations and trade unions, and largely operating in urban centres particularly the capital. It is characterized by being highly donor dependant, not only financially but often intellectually – with the result that many NGOs chase resources (HIV&AIDS, climate change etc) at the expense of fresh thinking about citizens' needs and priorities and how they can be addressed.

The proposed study is a follow-up by the Overseas Development Institute to an initial study conducted in March 2011. That study looked at four partner CSOs and their experience of the outcome mapping methodology in the pre-grant period and in the early months of implementation¹. A follow-up study is now planned to get a better picture of CSO effectiveness and the role of outcome mapping now that organisations are further into their programme implementation.

This is designed as part of a systematic Learning Strategy, developed for the programme during 2011, in which partners highlighted their wish for further support in implementing outcome mapping.

2. Background

AcT provides support to prospective and existing CSO partners to strengthen practices and capacities of strategic planning, management of implementation, monitoring and documentation of results and learning. One of the key tools that the AcT uses for this purpose is Outcome Mapping. AcT has adapted its approach to Outcome Mapping from ODI's RAPID Outcome Mapping Approach (ROMA). Since ODI's original introduction of ROMA to the AcT team in September 2009, the tool has been developed further and an AcT Resource Guide on Outcome Mapping produced². A total of 16 partners have been trained in Outcome Mapping.

The expected benefits to CSO Partners of AcT's outcome mapping approach are:

1. Strategic planning. Tools such as stakeholder and political economy analysis enable organisations to revisit or refine the theories of change upon which their strategic plans are based.

¹ http://www.accountability.or.tz/wp-content/uploads/2011/08/042011-RAPID-OM-report-_2_.pdf

² <http://www.accountability.or.tz/wp-content/uploads/2011/02/AcT-Resource-Guide1.pdf>

2. Monitoring and learning. The process produces information that can be used for embedding learning into the practices of implementation teams and also for monitoring by funders.
3. Organisational Effectiveness. The information produced during this process can help CSO managers prioritise issues about organisational development and effectiveness, and monitoring them systematically.
4. Communication and understanding. Following this process leads to an explicit understanding of the teams intent, which can be used to promote enhanced communication.

In addition to the training on Outcome Mapping, Act has provided follow up support and related advice on programme management. Technical support has also been given to partners through discussions and provision of comments on concepts, project documents and strategic plans in order to strengthen their strategic approaches.

Act provides this support to CSO Partners on the premise that it will add value to their work and help their chances of achieving change. This also helps to link Act's logframe outputs and indicators to those of CSO Partners and assists the Programme to ensure CSO Partners have (a) realistic and achievable change outcomes based on well thought out theories of change which they (b) make steady progress toward and (c) this progress is able to be measured.

Hence how CSOs develop and apply their strategic plans and how Act supports them through this process is critical factor for the success of the Programme which needs to be monitored and evaluated. Moreover, there is particular added value in more qualitative research being undertaken around these processes to produce case studies which can be used for learning as well as reporting on Act's progress.

3. Objectives

Where relevant these have been retained from the first study, in order to provide continuity.

The main objective

The objective of the review is to examine the experience of Act's partnerships with CSOs. The review will consider both the experience of Act's support to improving the CSO's organisational capacity, strategic approaches and effectiveness with regards to influencing change in policy, power and practice.

It is important to note that these case studies should not be perceived as evaluations of any kind and aren't assessing the performance of the CSOs but rather are seeking to learn from the CSOs and share that learning across and beyond the programme.

Specific objectives

1. To evaluate the strategic planning processes of a range of Act partners to bring about changes in policy, power and practice
2. To assess the partners' experience Act support, including the adoption of the Act approach to Outcome Mapping where applicable, and the effect this has had on strategic planning practices, implementation and monitoring
3. To document and communicate the outcomes achieved across all CSOs.
4. To provide feedback to Act on how to improve the support it provides to partners.



Process note

The intention is to provide a member of staff from an AcT partner organisation the opportunity to be involved in this piece of research as a contribution to their professional development. They will work closely with the staff member from ODI in fine-tuning the methodology, support the consultancy with the insights that come from local knowledge of the political economy of Tanzania and of civil society, be able to gain first hand insight into the work of other partner organisations, including their monitoring and learning systems, and contribute to the feedback to the AcT management team on the results of the study.

4. Outputs

4.1 Case study

The case study will include a light-touch revisit of two of the partners studied in the first set of CSOs. The originals were Daraja, Women's Dignity, Tanzania Forest Conservation Group and Oxfam. We would suggest that the revisit covers Oxfam and TFCG as organisations that have made demonstrable progress in the last year with their OM work. In addition, it is recommended that two new organisations are studied. One could usefully be drawn from partner organisations whose programme planning has directly involved 'ordinary citizens' rather than only development professionals. At least one should be a local organisation.

5. Activities

Following the identification of the local consultant from a partner organisation

1) Writing of second set of case studies and light-touch revisit of first set CSOs: February/April 2012

- Home based preparation: February/March
 - Agree case study methodology with AcT –likely to be similar to the one used in the first round.
 - Preliminary interviews selected CSOs to plan the work
 - Review of appropriate documentation from AcT and the CSOs
 - Design of light-touch review method
- A one week mission to Tanzania: April 2012
 - In depth interviews with several members of staff from each CSO
 - Meetings and interviews with AcT team members
 - Light touch revisit of set 1 CSOs
- Analysis, writing of case study report and quality assurance: April 2012
- Finalising light-touch revisit of set 1 CSOs and writing report: April/May 2012



6. Research questions

A number of research questions are presented below in relation to the specific objectives. Each activity will draw from these questions and further unpack them in developing the methodology prior to the activity.

1. To evaluate the strategic planning processes of a range of Act partners to bring about changes in policy, power and practice

- a) Is there evidence that the planning process builds on a stakeholder and context analysis that has informed the choice of strategy?
- b) Are the changes sought in policy, practice or behavior clearly identified?
- c) What was the plan for influencing these changes? (i.e. spaces/opportunities identified, actors mapped, desired changes in policy, practice and power relations identified)
- d) How was this plan implemented and/or adapted?
- e) How was the plan monitored, and how were outputs and outcomes documented?
- f) Were any changes in policy, practice and/or power observed?
- g) How did the interventions contribute to these changes?
- h) Did the observed impact, or lack thereof, lead to any changes or adjustments in the plan and its implementation?

2. To assess the partners' experience Act support, including the adoption of the Act where applicable, and the effect this has had on strategic planning practices, implementation and monitoring

- a) What form of support has been provided by Act to the partner (e.g. comments on proposals/strategies, OM training, support M&E/OD/Finance)?
- b) If relevant, how has the OM approach been understood and applied in the organization?
 - I. Did the contextual analysis supported through the OM training lead to any development/changes in the organisation's analysis and interpretation of the context and aim of its activities?
 - II. Has the development of Progress Markers been a useful supplement to the organisation's systems to monitoring and document implementation and impact?
 - III. Has the organisation adopted the use of Outcome Journals? If so, what has been the experience and how useful has it been seen as a method of monitoring progress?
 - IV. Has any other type of journals been adopted following the OM training, or is this something that the organisation would be interesting in exploring further?
 - V. How have the OM tools been adopted to fit the needs of the organisation and has their introduction led to any other changes in the approach of the organisation?



- c) What has been the overall experience of being an AcT partner?
- I. To what extent has comments or questions on proposals or strategies been seen to be useful in strengthening the organisation's approach, and to what extent have they been seen to be delaying progress by increasing "transaction costs"?
 - II. Has the adoption of OM been useful, or are there any part of the process that would have been more useful to do differently?
 - III. Has the AcT partnership made the organisation's reporting requirements more burdensome? If yes, does the organisation find that the added efforts needed for documentation and reporting is justified by the usefulness of the extra information that is produced?

3. To document and communicate the outcomes achieved across all CSOs.

- a) What are the emerging changes in policy, practice and power relations that CSOs have been observing?
- b) What has been AcT's contribution to these changes through the work of the CSOs?

7. Budget for activities

An estimate budget for each activity needs to be developed.