

Supporting demand-side accountability in Tanzania:

Is AcT helping CSO Partners to become
more effective in achieving change?

Simon Hearn and Harry Jones, Overseas Development Institute

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Introduction

The Accountability in Tanzania Programme (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 produced. A total of 8 partners have been trained in Outcome Mapping.

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 reporting on AcT's progress, as well as improving the work and impact of the partnership.

This report aims to highlight the experiences so far of four the AcT partners in terms of their strategic planning and the support received through the AcT partnership. The CSOs researched for this study include: Women's Dignity, Daraja, TFCG/MJUMITA and Oxfam GB.

Women's Dignity works with marginalised girls and women to enable them to realise their rights to health as well as promoting citizen action for increased accountability. They particularly focus on obstetric fistula as a determinant of poor people's wellbeing. As a previous holder of a strategic grant agreement with DFID, Women's Dignity was included in the first round of grants which came through in January 2010.

Daraja are a relatively young CSO working in Njombe district at the local level. They have three programmes, their most well known is a local newspaper, *Twende Pamoja*, which aims to respond directly to the needs of the local people, deriving their content from the most pressing issues and giving a voice to the people. They also run an innovative SMS service for monitoring water pressure at local water points. Their third programme is less developed than the other two but focuses on research and national policy advocacy.

TFCG is working in partnership with **MJUMITA** on this AcT funded project called Forest Justice in Tanzania. The Tanzania Forest Conservation Group is a well established NGO that works to conserve

and restore the biodiversity of globally important forests in Tanzania through capacity building, advocacy, research, community development and protected area management. The Mtandao wa Jamii wa Usimamizi wa Mimitu Tanzania (MJUMITA) is a relatively new network of community groups involved in participatory forest management in Tanzania, founded by TFCG in 2000 and made an independent NGO in 2007. The Forest Justice in Tanzania project is working to bring about change in forest governance in Tanzania.

Oxfam GB works with smallholder farmers and vulnerable groups in the regions of Ngorongoro, Tanga and Shinyanga across three programmes: education, agriculture and pastoralism. With AcT support they are integrating governance approaches into these programmes and forming a new programme; Chukua Hatua which is seeking to increase citizen engagement in monitoring public service and resource management. They are employing a series of pilot projects to test their theories of change, of which the successful ones will be rolled out at a larger scale.

This study was based around semi-structured interviews with CSO staff and the AcT team – these were mostly in-person, held by both researchers, but where this was not possible interviews were carried out over the telephone. Staff were interviewed individually, and in confidence (hence why no list of interviewees is provided). 12 interviews were held with CSO staff, and 5 with the AcT team. Various CSO-specific and general AcT documents were reviewed in order to provide supplementary information and background. Interview transcripts were drafted based on reflections from both interviewees, and analysed with the assistance of qualitative data analysis software.

There were some factors which limit the robustness of the inferences which can be drawn from the study. While it had been hoped that at least 4 interviewees would be found for each organisation, this was not possible for each of the CSOs studied. Also, while it was hoped that we could speak to individuals who played a variety of roles, again this didn't prove possible. The fact that some of the CSOs interviewed were at a relatively early stage of receiving AcT support and applying Outcome Mapping limited the relevance of further interviews, but also further limits the extent to which firm conclusions can be drawn from the study.

Having said this, we would argue that this study was a worthwhile exercise, and that the findings should be taken seriously. Although the quantity and variety of interviews was not what was hoped, many of them seemed to be of high quality, with genuine and honest engagement by interviewees. A number of themes stand out as being supported not just by direct statements from other interviews, but by other aspects which can be interpreted from the transcripts. As such, at minimum our findings mark out issues which bear serious consideration, as evidenced-based reflections on the way forwards for the AcT programme.

The report is structured in four main sections. Section one looks at the context which AcT is intervening in – bringing out some key features and challenges for promoting CSOs role in strengthening accountability in Tanzania. Section two describes the processes of interest to the study and the perception of these processes by AcT partners; the overall grants process, the OM process, learning and networking and other forms of support by AcT to its partners. Section three discusses the emerging outcomes of the support given to the partners by AcT and section four presents a set of recommendations for the AcT programme.

1 CSOs working on the demand-side of accountability in Tanzania

The AcT programme set out with some ideas and propositions about CSOs in Tanzania, their capacity and what drives it, and their current and potential roles for promoting accountability. Although the AcT team has already begun reflecting on these assumptions, informally but also by producing a qualitative partner baseline (Dyer, 2011), further light can be shed on them from the findings of this study. We will take a number of points in turn, and compare expectations and experiences so far.

1.1 Strategic focus and monitoring

Two core assumptions underpinning the AcT programme: the CSOs capacity to act strategically is crucial for their effectiveness in holding up the ‘demand’ side of accountability, and that in Tanzania CSOs are likely to have variable or low capacities on this front. This study was able to gain some insight into the latter proposition, which seems to hold some truth. The rapid growth in the number of CSOs in Tanzania over the past 20 years has been observed to be largely ‘supply driven’ (Sundet 2011), a response to the availability of donor funding: since much of this funding is project-based (and for a period, largely focusing on service-delivery rather than advocacy), organisations tend to work around these kinds of shorter timeframes and focus on whatever areas they are able to win projects in.

This trend of having run the risk of being overly ‘project-driven’ was mentioned by some interviewees, and others described the habits of staff and teams whose planning was largely driven by projects, activities and outputs rather than considerations of the ‘bigger picture’. To a certain extent this can become an embedded mindset, or part of the culture of an organisation –some interviewees remarked that in some instances staff feel seem to feel much more comfortable when they are making themselves busy, rather than taking time to reflect on outcomes.

Related to this are practices around monitoring and reporting. The qualitative partner baseline notes that staff of CSOs are often quite well versed in ‘aid administration’ approaches, setting targets appropriate for service-delivery activities. The interviews would seem to support this idea. We found that, as with planning practices, monitoring seems to have previously taken place largely at the ‘outputs’ level, with CSO staff collecting information as an administrative requirement separate from their real work rather than an opportunity for learning. However, it is also worth noting that this does not necessarily mean that staff don’t consider the outcome level: one interviewee remarked that staff would provide a lot more information on changes at this level in discussions with colleagues, and when probed to speak about these issues. This means that, rather than (or as well as) an issue of technical capacity and (previous) incentives, the lack of outcome monitoring may be a matter of low confidence about talking about certain issues in administrative or formal reports, or about reporting on them to donors, or in a foreign language.

1.2 Thinking and acting politically

A second pair of ideas which lies behind AcT’s approach is that many CSOs in Tanzania are not accustomed to probing the political dimensions of development problems – and that this may be necessary in order to make further progress on governance and accountability. This is why AcT set out to explicitly introduce a political economy approach and stakeholder mapping to partners. Interviews seemed to provide some support for the former, with several people arguing that there can be a certain tendency to be stuck in the ‘formal’ interpretation of actors’ roles and motivations,

rather than digging into the less visible world of the incentives which really face people such as local government officials and district commissioners. Although one organisation in the study already carries out formal ‘power analysis’ as part of their planning procedures, many reported that it could be quite difficult to talk about issues such as corruption. However, this is not quite the same as people not being aware of this kind of issue, and in fact many interviewees demonstrated (and reported) a keen appreciation of political issues when it came to the risks of operating as a CSO in Tanzania. The careful lines that have to be tread in terms of staying ‘onside’ with key officials and managing political risk are no simple matter, and something which CSO staff often seem to understand quite well, even if they are not always forthcoming about talking about these issues with donors, or writing them up into a report.

What rang more true is a reticence to take an ‘outside track’ (See AcT’s Theory of Change¹ for a discussion of this) approach to influencing the government. Previous analyses had noted that CSOs’ mode of engagement tended to involve working with government, taking part in joint meetings with development partners and government representatives rather than making public demands or being overtly critical. Many interviewees remarked that this comes from a long history of being unable to talk about government, and is quite culturally embedded – communities are not at all used to making demands on local government. One interviewee put it like this: “we feel there can only be accountability if there is a change in the community as well”.

So while CSOs do recognise political risk, they are less keen to ‘stick their necks out’, especially not based on suggestions by donor organisations who may not be around to feel the consequences. Some questioned whether the underlying premise holds true, whether being critical and taking a stand was indeed necessary. Other signs seem to suggest that the precise way in which Tanzanian CSOs do take the ‘outside track’ may need to develop as a matter of trial and imitation of peers – with many organisations happy to follow Haki Elimu’s lead in the way they use media, embedding further innovations in CSOs modes of engagement on accountability may proceed in this way too (discussion with and copying from peers rather than based on planning cycles and tools).

1.3 CSO capacities

The original intention of the AcT programme was to fund CSOs with high capacity, the “blue chip” organisations in Tanzania. Some of the team reported that the original intention for the programme had been to take a relatively ‘hands off’ approach, based on the assumption that the biggest and most prominent CSOs were highly effective and competent on a number of fronts. In practice, there were two issues which have required attention. Firstly, it seems that expectations over financial management capacities and systems were not fully realistic – some of the organisations funded have required assistance to build up this side of their functioning, and it was not practical to simply hold partners to strict standards without also providing assistance in meeting them.

Another issue is the extent to which individual capacity is distributed throughout the organisations. In many instances it seems that CSOs rely on a few multi-talented individuals at high levels in the organisation, without a significant amount of capacity underneath them. While these individuals can take part in training, formulating of strategic plans and monitoring frameworks, and so on, there is a sense on the part of interviewees in AcT and CSOs that it may be important to attempt to embed these processes and concepts more fully throughout the organisation.

¹ <http://www.accountability.or.tz/wp-content/uploads/2011/03/AcTs-ToC.pdf>

One final issue was that of local ownership and anchoring of CSOs. Sundet's political economy analysis (2011) identifies that one key issue for the effectiveness of Tanzanian CSOs in promoting accountability is the forces which mitigate against genuine social movements, and which tend to squeeze out processes and structures which might enable CSOs to properly represent the views of marginalised constituencies. While this was not intended to be a central topic of this review, it is interesting to note that some CSOs seemed to have a number of strengths in terms of participatory practices and being locally embedded – including bottom-up formation of strategic plans, community-based visioning as a tool for planning projects, and projects which garner a significant amount of local ownership. The question of how this kind of feature weighs up against strategic capacity in terms of what might be the most important to build in CSOs in order to improve accountability in Tanzania is left open.

2 AcT's partnership with CSOs

A partnership with AcT means more than receiving a grant, it means entering into a programme of support with the aim of enhancing the ability to influence change. This section describes the experiences of the four interviewed CSOs with regards to this partnership. It looks at the overall grant application process, the OM facilitation and training, the networking and learning functions and other support roles.

2.1 Overall grant application process

AcT is a non-traditional donor in the Tanzanian context in many ways; not least in its grant application process. Rather than requiring a detailed proposal, the first phase of the application process requires a one page concept note detailing the idea for change. Those that get accepted at this stage move on to phase two where AcT then reviews strategic plans and other documents and works with the organisation to decide upon the level of support needed to get the plans to level where they can be funded. The level of support varies but will often involve common elements including Outcome Mapping training and facilitation, discussions about the theory of change and strategies, financial management and risk capacity assessment. The intention of this phase is to ensure the CSO is very clear on their intentions to bring about realistic and measurable change that relates to the reality on the ground and that they have clearly defined and coherent strategies. Once the strategic plan has been honed and agreed the strategic grant agreement can commence.

The experience of this process varies widely across the four CSO with the time between stage 1 and stage 2 varying between a few days to over a year. Three out of the four CSOs mentioned that the process and expectations were not clear up front and that the goal posts seemed to change regularly, and in general involved a lot of back and forth communication between them and AcT. In particular, it is not made clear to the CSOs at the beginning as to what would constitute an acceptable strategic plan – the impression given is that this is not clear to AcT themselves and in fact they judge this on a case by case basis and only know what they are looking for when they see it. The exception is one of the CSOs who had a very quick and simple process that didn't involve an overly intensive consultation and review process and whose strategic plan was accepted promptly.

The variation in experiences demonstrates the customised approach that AcT employs, which rather than being a conveyor belt or tick-box standardised process, seeks to engage the grantees in honest and deep dialogue about their intentions. This approach is integral to the AcT programme and, from its perspective, crucial for governance work, which is seeking to transform the institutions that affect the everyday lives of citizens in Tanzania and hence requires deeply rooted theories of change. In a

context where many CSOs have become content in only planning for and reporting on delivery of outputs, it is vital to challenge them to begin thinking about more transformative change – and to employ mechanisms of measuring that change. This cannot be done through a standardised process but must involve ongoing dialogue, which is often uncomfortable and challenging. It is clear from the CSOs interviewed that this approach is different to previous experiences and very much appreciated for its desire for detail but not so much for its lack of transparency.

From AcT's perspective, the capacity building process, to get CSOs' strategic plans to a point where they can be funded, has been evolutionary in that initially, there was never an intention for the process to be so intensive at the planning stage, but as opportunities have arisen, interests piqued and needs become clearer AcT have had to alter their approach. This is most evident in the hiring of the Planning Mentor to take on the role of facilitation and training of the CSOs.

2.2 Outcome Mapping training and facilitation

The key elements of AcT's approach to influencing changes in policy, practice and power relationships are 1) that the social, political and economic context in which the change is happening should be researched and understood; 2) that it is vital to have a theory of change that reflects the reality of the context and 3) that the changes sought should be expressed in terms of behaviour change of key stakeholders that can be observed and measured. These principles are operationalised through the Outcome Mapping methodology which AcT has adopted and made available to its partners. Although OM is pitched as an option for CSOs rather than a requirement, in general it is strongly encouraged for CSOs to work through the process. As part of stage two in the grants process, AcT will look at strategic plans, M&E strategies and other documents to assess whether to offer OM to the CSO or not. Only in one of the four CSOs was OM not implemented, and this was because of a combination of a very clear strategy, a sensible theory of change and a way of working that already captures relevant information. For the remaining three CSOs, OM was offered and adopted and although they have all gone through the OM workshop and developed their progress markers, none of them had got further than this and were therefore unable share experiences of putting the OM into practice.

The general process for introducing OM starts with an informal introduction to the approach in a meeting between members of the AcT team, usually the programme director and/or the planning mentor, and senior members from the CSO. This is then followed by a more intense training and strategic planning workshop, usually involving many members of staff from the CSO. The expected output from the workshop is a set of progress markers written up for each of the priority stakeholders, which often involves follow up work after the workshop. Since the progress markers this form the basis of the outcome monitoring system it is important to get them right, so AcT would review the PMs and offer advice to sharpen them up.

There are two interesting variations on this process. One of the CSOs interviewed decided that they would only be able to generate meaningful information from the OM exercises by involving the boundary partners and other stakeholders. A workshop was organised for over 50 people and facilitated in Kiswahili by the AcT planning mentor and two others. This was the first time within the AcT programme that boundary partners were involved in the OM process and proved to be a great learning opportunity for the programme. But it is not without its challenges, the biggest of which was the language barriers – both in understanding the steps of OM but also understanding accountability and governance concepts. Another big challenge was the difficulty the boundary

partners and community members had in imagining that things could be different, let alone expressing those aspirations.

Another CSO had almost the opposite experience in that only two staff members were involved in the OM process. This was mainly for the reason that the programme team was yet to be hired and it didn't make sense to involve others at this time. For this CSO, who are much more used to a participatory approach to planning, AcT's approach was unusual and would be more comfortable with engaging a wider group of stakeholders, including the villages with whom they are working, in the planning process. This comes with the caveat that at a certain point, decisions have to be made and language finalised by a small group of decision makers –for example it doesn't make sense to develop detailed indicators in a workshop, but it does make sense to gather as much information in a workshop as possible, and later craft these into useful indicators.

For each of the three CSOs trained, OM was a completely new way of thinking about planning, monitoring and evaluation. There was a lot of appreciation for the methodology and they all recognised its usefulness in the kind of work they are doing that seeks transformative change through advocacy and citizen engagement. In many cases, OM was seen to fill a gap in the capacity of the CSOs, where they either didn't have tools before or where their tools were inadequate for the tasks they were finding themselves doing. The characteristics of OM that were most appreciated were:

- its focus on people and behaviour change – given that many of the problems the CSOs are working on are about implementation of policy, not its formulation, but also that all forms of change can be broken down to behaviour;
- the way it inspired ambition through its focus on progressive and sustainable change in the world rather than outputs of a project;
- its ability to make transformative change visible and hence observable;
- the way it helps develop clear and specific aims rooted in reality of the context;
- its methodical and systematic approach which helps identify who we should work with and what changes we want to see.

A number of limitations of the OM approach were also shared by those interviewed. For example, there was a sense among the interviewees that OM was being sold as 'the be all and end all' but in reality it didn't live up to this expectation since by itself it can't capture all the information that is needed. Another difficulty that some have had with OM is formulating detailed progress markers for actors that are largely unknown at the beginning of the programme. And even if progress markers can be developed for each boundary partner, the systems for data collection and analysis are not well developed and the pure quantity of indicators is unmanageable. One of the interviewees felt the focus on changes at the policy level is at the expense of changes on the ground, which are just as important in most cases – although in practice, many of the CSOs are using OM more often to track change at the community level rather than policy. Finally, there is a concern that the journals are too easy to manipulate and too subjective to be used as evidence for change. Many of these challenges are very common, and often expressed by people coming from more proscriptive M&E environments as they first come across OM. It is difficult to tell at this stage how much these opinions are due to the fact that the CSOs are relatively new to OM and still developing their systems.

2.3 Networking and learning

Another element of the AcT programme that is central to its strategy is learning among the partners about what works in strengthening accountability and fighting corruption. The intention is to build learning mechanisms that are independent of the AcT programme per se, so that they are sustainable and will remain in the long term even if the programme does not. The main way in which AcT stimulates learning in this respect is through regular learning events. These are quarterly, informal, half day, facilitated discussion events, designed for AcT partners, where the agenda is set by the participants themselves. There have been two events so far, the first was about whether CSOs have been effective in strengthening accountability in Tanzania and started with arguments to and for and then opened out into a series of 'world cafe' style discussions. The second event, on the subject of media and communications, followed an 'open space' format which allowed participants to set the agenda. The most popular topics were grassroots organizations and dealing with political risk collectively. The third event will be held in March 2011 on the subject of 'the policy gap' and how it plays out in the health, water and education sectors and will include presentations from 3 or 4 partners. So far the events have mostly focussed on programmatic areas but there is an intention to also look at operational aspects, such as financial management.

The learning events are very popular among the CSOs interviewed and have been very well attended. There is an appreciation of the informal style of the events with a focus more on discussion than presentation. One of the biggest benefits of the events is the networking opportunities that it enables. Many of those interviewed remarked that having regular contact with other organisations is beneficial, for some it was about learning from the bigger, more established organisations, for others it was about coordinating activities on the ground. One example of this comes from Oxfam, who got an idea from the second learning event to use theatre and video as a monitoring exercise to carry out with their community animators. One criticism of the events was that they weren't long enough to hear all the great stories and ideas from the other organisations.

2.4 Other support

In addition to the support mentioned above, AcT also provide more ad-hoc advice and support. Many of the CSOs commented on the challenge function that AcT plays – providing regular feedback on the CSOs latest ideas and challenging theories, assumptions and strategies. While this function is greatly appreciated by the grantees, there is a concern that the advice is not always practical and/or suitable for the CSOs. In particular, there is a feeling among some interviewees that AcT has been encouraging more confrontational approaches to advocacy; seeking front page headlines and challenging the government more directly; approaches which are inherently more risky. Yet, for some, the feeling is that AcT isn't doing enough to help mitigate these risks; it is left for the CSOs to take. That is not to say that AcT ignores these issues, far from it, risk is a common area of discussion with partners and space is given for peer learning on this subject (as mentioned above).

3 Outcomes so far

Given the timing of this study it is not possible to look at how effective the AcT programme has been, and it is quite difficult to identify concrete changes achieved. Many of the CSOs have only just received AcT funding, and others have only recently begun work on AcT-funded projects. Some have not taken on the AcT Outcome Mapping approach, and out of those who have, only one has got as far as submitting the first monitoring report (and they were not one of our study CSOs). Therefore,

we will largely highlight factors which are hopefully signs of future changes rather than significant shifts in themselves.

3.1 Benefits of the AcT grant

A number of the interviewees felt that the nature of the AcT grant provided a number of benefits compared to other sources of donor funding. By providing core funding, or support which was close to being core funding, AcT is providing the space for CSOs to become more strategic. Bringing strategic focus has been a challenge where a CSO has to do its best to secure funding from whatever projects are available, meaning that work had often been supply-driven. A number of interviewees praised the freedom and space which came with AcT funding in terms of how they work towards their goals – for example, TFCG reported that AcT funding will allow them to expand the geographic coverage of their work, strengthening their network and providing more support to their members.

A few interviewees commented that this is particularly important for relatively young organisations, which are finding their feet and may need some flexible support at the outset. Many interviewees also praised the prioritisation of demand-side accountability issues, as an area which they had wanted to work in for a while but not had the opportunity where a lot of donor funding was focused on service delivery. Some argued that this in itself was allowing them to bring greater sustainability to areas they'd been working in – for example, by addressing governance issues in schools this should be a more sustainable investment in the education system than simply providing services alone.

3.2 Perceived value and potential of OM

The interviews met with considerable buy-in to AcT's Outcome Mapping approach. CSO staff reported that they had been keen to receive more than just financial assistance, and OM was nearly universally felt to be a valuable tool. These observations were echoed at various levels in CSOs, rather than simply by the staff most directly engaged in the process of formulating their frameworks with AcT. The inputs from and relationship with the AcT planning mentor was spoken about in glowing terms. More generally it is important to note that the *process* of engagement around planning, monitoring and reporting frameworks was felt to have provided considerable learning and value.

There were many aspects of OM which were felt to bring considerable innovation and value to the CSOs work. Many felt that it is a relatively empowering tool, some argued that in this way it “inspires ambition”. This comes as quite a change for those who are not used to thinking about more strategic issues, and it was felt to provide a radically different way of working within the CSOs. Others remarked that it had potential to give structure to observations which were otherwise not explicitly recorded, for example on field visits.

It was also felt to be particularly useful for approaching issues of governance, accountability and policy influence. Especially for organisations not particularly used to working in advocacy, staff reported that it provided a valuable way of thinking through who to work with and interact with, who they have the capacity to work with and who to prioritise. The focus on monitoring behaviour change could be especially useful given the ‘policy gap’ in Tanzania – entrenched behaviour could be argued to be the main thing needing changing (rather than what is written in actual policy documents), in order to improve accountability.

3.3 Outcomes linked to the Act OM approach

Although it is very early on, as mentioned, there were some small concrete changes which were attributed to the AcT Outcome Mapping approach:

- TFCG reported that the stakeholder analysis made them fully appreciate the importance of the private sector; furthermore when it came to the outcome challenges they realised there was a gap in terms of guidance on 'best practice'. This in turn led to developing a new element of their programme, on certification.
- TFCG are also currently taking up elements of the AcT OM approach elsewhere in their organisation. They are embedding it in other advocacy work, which they are doing as part of a REDD project, giving special attention to the stakeholders matrix and their motivations.
- Oxfam have attempted to use Outcome Mapping with the communities they work with – an exercise which clearly was a big 'learning experience' but nonetheless this is something which will be followed up on further. TFCG/MJUMITA also revealed that they are planning on using OM with their members.
- The increasing demand for further outcome mapping training and support should also be marked down as an important outcome. TFCG and Oxfam both reported demand from different areas of the organisation to learn more about the methodology, and the demand for a Kiswahili translation is a promising sign. There are signs of interest from organisations who had not initially received support, such as Daraja.

4 Recommendations

This study has highlighted a number of recommendations for the AcT programme, predominantly for the management team. The recommendations cluster around three areas; how the management team communicate with its partners, the introduction and application of the OM process and networking and learning role of the programme. It is understood that there may be actions already underway to address some of these priorities (it was of course not possible to get a full picture of everything planned by the AcT team) – in these cases, our recommendation should be interpreted as adding further support for the importance of these actions.

4.1 OM and AcT support to partners

1. Given that OM is built into the grant-making process, and will be a pre-funding requirement, it is important to be realistic about what to expect from the initial workshop. OM introduces a very different way of working and requires a change in mindset which often takes time to set in and may only be realised through implementation. Because of this it is important to build in support mechanisms after the initial training and framework development to ensure that the tools and frameworks remain relevant and useful. Previous experience² suggests that it is often useful to review and rationalise OM frameworks after 6-9 months of working with them.
2. OM is intended to be an iterative exercise, not a one off static process. This is clearly communicated in the AcT Resource Guide but is not clearly realised in the practice of the

² See Making Outcome Mapping Work, Harry Jones, 2006:
<http://www.outcomemapping.ca/resource/resource.php?id=139>

CSOs. It would be beneficial if AcT played a facilitation role in reviewing partners' OM frameworks, possibly with further context analysis or action research to test the theories of change. Is the choice of boundary partner still relevant, do the outcome challenges need altering (perhaps because the position of an actor has changed as a result of the programme), are the strategies still relevant, are the progress markers realistic?

3. Experience has shown that there is value in involving boundary partners and beneficiaries in OM process, albeit with clear challenges. This kind of participatory approach (which is more in line with standard IDRC Outcome Mapping) should be encouraged in the future with one important consideration: there isn't always a need to go through the whole OM process explicitly, using the technical language and concepts. Instead, facilitative questions can be asked to illicit the same information – see the facilitation guides in the OM manual.
4. More generally, and related to the three points above, it is crucial for AcT to aim to have OM frameworks properly embedded in the organisations they are working with. A relatively broad ownership of the tool will be crucial in order to facilitate the change in attitudes, mindsets and habits which are required in order to feel the full benefits of the framework.
5. There are elements of the standard OM that can be useful in certain situations and should be made clear to grantees – in line with the intention to offer a flexible approach. For example the vision and mission steps can be very powerful at building unity in a diverse group and offer a clearer entry point into OM rather than going in at boundary partners and progress markers. The vision step also inspires teams to start by reflecting on the world outside rather than the project goals. Outcome challenges are also much more useful and coordinated when they are used in conjunction with a vision and mission.
6. Another tool to consider bringing in is strategy maps which can be very powerful at communicating an organisation's strategy and helping them prioritise and balance different approaches to ensure they make the best contribution to the intended change.
7. The Outcome mapping journals are a potential weak point in that they are crucial not only for demonstrating outcomes but also for promoting ownership of the OM process, but there is little evidence, among those interviewed, that they are being used (although we are aware of other CSOs using them; namely, TNRF). There is no easy way to generate a universal format that will be picked up and used. It involves trial and error and an openness to be creative and learn. The main recommendation here is not to hold on to one way of data collection but to consistently ask CSOs how they expect to collect data on changing behaviours, who will use the data, how it will be used and for what purpose. Demonstrating that they will be useful for themselves in many parts of programme management will aid adoption and ownership.
8. Introduce the partners to the OM community, demonstrate the resources and wealth of experience there and possibly even link them up to other programmes using OM outside of AcT.
9. AcT's use of OM for strategic planning is premised on the idea that the main gap in CSO effectiveness is strategic planning. However, as mentioned in section 1 there are also issues to do with forces that prevent genuine, locally owned and anchored political movements. For this reason, AcT should seriously look into the extent to which they may be able to

support this aspect as well, promoting CSOs 'downward' accountability to the groups they are meant to represent.

4.2 Communication between the AcT management team and its partners

10. Provide partners with more digestible info about the programme and relevant issues. For example, there is interest in learning from the political economy analysis exercise but the paper is perceived as too long and difficult to apply. The paper could be broken down into bite-size chunks with recommendations on its application.
11. Another common request was to see AcTs theory of change – explaining their overall approach to promoting accountability, how different activities are hoped to contribute to this and where it is hoped that the different CSOs will fit in to this.
12. Provide partners with the big picture of the programme to show how partners overlap in terms of their areas of interest, geographic scope, types of strategies and partners, and patterns of outcomes. This would help partners to understand their role in the programme's theory of change and to have a clearer idea of how they can coordinate with other partners.
13. Present a clear roadmap of the overall process up front and ensure partners are clear about the expectations and requirements at each stage as well as the support options that are available to them.
14. Clarify the recent changes in DFID and their potential impact on the AcT programme.
15. Be more proactive in supporting CSOs in understanding and mitigating the risks of engaging in politically sensitive issues.

4.3 Networking and learning

16. Although there was overwhelming support among interviewees for more learning events, there was a split view with regards to the frequency. Some were content with three or four a year and didn't want to be overburdened with invitations but some were keen for more in order to have more time to interact with other partners. Our recommendation is to keep running the main events at the same frequency but to build in other, optional, opportunities for engagement. Some ideas are presented in the next few recommendations.
17. Facilitate interaction between meetings through online spaces, for example an email list, a private blog or better use of the AcT website for knowledge sharing among partners. This option is popular among the partners interviewed but needs to be organised carefully. Dedicated facilitation is needed for online engagement to ensure participants are not overloaded with information but that the optimum pace of interaction is maintained with a steady flow of relevant content. This role would to best be played by a member of the AcT management team; the programme coordinator or the planning mentor would be appropriate.
18. Another option to facilitate learning between CSOs would be to provide incentives for CSOs to learn from each other face-to-face. This could involve funding and helping to organise trips where staff members from a variety of AcT partners can go on a day's 'study tour' to learn about a particular project or activity of one of the partners.

19. Organise different types of events that attract different members of staff within the partner CSOs – would alleviate the overburdening of individuals. As well as the already planned events looking at operational areas of organisation management, there could be events targeted at more junior programme staff.
20. Linked to this, AcT could play a stronger role in encouraging more coordination at the programme level, facilitating links between organisations involved in similar thematic areas or strategies. This would give CSOs the opportunity to challenge each other’s theory of change, share their context analysis, mitigate risks and build confidence in these new ways of working.

5 Further research

In addition to the recommendations for the AcT programme above, we also have recommendations for possible further research activities that ODI could lead.

1. Partner survey: a survey could be designed in order to understand levels of understanding, attitudes on key issues and how well-embedded different practices and approaches are. This could be sent to individuals in partner organisations in the near future and would provide a baseline, which can be compared to a future survey and which would provide data about the influence of AcT’s work on partners. The survey could be online or via email, and involve as little as 10-15 multiple choice questions, which would therefore take little more than 5 minutes to complete.
2. The next set of case studies should focus: i) more fully on the organisation as a whole, and ii) looking at the use and implementation of plans, and monitoring and reporting frameworks.
3. During the next visit to Tanzania the ODI team should also visit the organisations included in this set of case studies, even if more briefly than full studies being carried out. This would allow us to go along the ‘journey’ of implementing OM with these organisations, as well as bringing better comparability for future assessments to be made of the influence of AcT.
4. It may be interesting for the ODI team (possibly RAPID as well as PoGo) to provide feedback on a key element of AcT’s theory of change, namely assessing the question of ‘what does it take for a CSO in Tanzania to be effective in promoting governance?’ Strategic planning is hypothesised to be an important need and the main basis for AcT’s orientation, but other factors (such as local ownership) have also been proposed. This study could be done as part of or alongside the next set of case studies, and it would likely involve interviews with CSOs as well as a review of the literature on CSOs in similar contexts.



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To find out more please visit our website or offices at the PPF Tower, Dar es Salaam. Address: P. O. Box 1160, Dar es Salaam; Tel: +255 22 2122003; email: act@accountability.or.tz; website: www.accountability.or.tz

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