

# Governance and Accountability: Grant Giving Programmes in the African Context

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DFID is increasingly funding programmes in East Africa and elsewhere (e.g. GTF and other UK administered funds) to strengthen the role of civil society to promote government accountability and increase citizen participation in democratic processes. The programmatic goals set for these programmes are necessarily ambitious, involving complex high level mass behaviour change among citizens and civil society organisations. To this end programmes are often structured around grant giving facilities which can strengthen capacity within civil society along specified programmatic areas, offering a technical route for donors to engage in highly politicised national processes where they can remain sufficiently removed from national politics so as not to compromise their operational capacity. But what does this mean for programmes, how they are monitored and the results that we can expect them to achieve. This short paper will discuss some of the implications that grant giving programmes have for influencing development results with specific reference to DFID's Accountability Tanzania Programme.

## ***Programmatic goals of strengthening governance and accountability***

The goals and objectives of development programmes aimed towards strengthening governance and accountability often ask for social change among societies. They aim to influence peoples' perceptions to a degree where people interact differently towards their governments and each other to create different social contracts where government actions reflect people's aspirations, wants and needs. These ambitions are of monumental proportion, requiring the change in attitudes and beliefs of millions of people, a shift in the national psyche.

How to create this change within countries has been the subject of considerable research to unpick accountability mechanisms within countries where programmes like DFID's AcT Tanzania Programme are designed to contribute towards the strengthening of vertical accountability mechanisms. However the drive for results and a need to understand how change can be attributed to a programme's actions can lead to a confusion between the measurement of overall vertical accountability within a country as opposed to the specific functions of a programme's activities.

This is reflected in the design of a logical framework for monitoring where the logic chain drawn up is oriented towards measuring societal change rather than the actual interventions which are being made. The problem that this creates is that measuring societal change is an unrealistic goal for the scale of the programme. Not only this, but the indicators that are being used to measure societal change do not reflect the actions of the programme sufficiently. Consequently, indicators are unable to provide any concrete evidence of causal relationships between programme interventions and national level change. Particularly where evidence consists of a mixture of internal reporting and changes to national level indicators from external survey instruments. The use of external survey instruments as a vehicle for monitoring can at best only reflect correlatory evidence and provides no indication of how one action can influence another.

### ***Who is responsible for what in programmes?***

The difficulty in measuring attribution becomes a greater challenge if monitoring systems are not linked to different actors and their specific functions within a programme. In the case of grant giving programmes there are two main actors who serve different functions. On the one hand there is the management team whose actual activities based around the procurement of grants to civil society organisations. To monitor their effectiveness indicators should be based around these functions. Higher level goals for the project management team must be adapted according to the outcomes which their activities are supposed to achieve. In this case it would be appropriate to assume that higher level impact and outcomes of grant activities would be the capacity building of partner organisations and organisational development of the civil society organisations they work with, or more CSO time and work devoted to the programme areas that they wish to encourage. These responsibilities need to be assessed independently from changes to strengthening societal change. Their activities are not directly targeting societal change but enhanced capacity of CSO activities towards governance and accountability based projects.

On the other hand partner organisations need to be able to monitor the effectiveness of their activities according to the results they are trying to achieve. The indicators to monitor effectiveness here will be very different from the indicators of success for the management team given that partner activities are actually trying to foster the change that the programme wants to deliver. However, these again must be specific to their individual programmes and activities and should be monitored accordingly.

### ***Monitoring actor functions vs. overall vertical accountability***

The logframe for the AcT programme as it stands is oriented towards monitoring vertical accountability within Tanzania. In trying to attribute programme activities to the strengthening of national accountability programme goals are set at such a high level that there is a tendency to put outcome indicators as outputs to retain the logic of a programme intervention. The danger of this is that programme implementers will be held to account for indicators which are outside their control. Implementers should be monitoring their ability to produce outcomes but this should be used as a vehicle to change outputs according to their effectiveness in realising outcomes. However, ultimate responsibility should be for the production of outputs with cognisance of their eventual outcomes rather than for outcomes themselves.

With this in mind it may be more appropriate to bring the logframe in line with the responsibilities and functions of different actors who are responsible for implementation. As it stands the logical framework tries to amalgamate different actors' responsibilities. This means that the outputs that have been set are almost solely based upon the outcomes that partner organisations are expected to produce as a result of increased funding. However, there is no mention of the role or monitoring of the project management team who will be responsible for grant distribution. It seems unproductive to assess the effectiveness of the programme without including the responsibilities of the management team who will be overseeing the programme. A more nuanced approach to reporting would be more effective in highlighting areas of success or failure to provide a better vehicle to assess impact.



to be employed to hold the outputs to relate to the purpose are stretched too much to make good programming sense. Each of these will be drawn out below to highlight these difficulties.

From table 1 it is evident that the assumptions needed for outputs to be linked to outcomes are substantial. Some of the outcomes do not even fit in with the outputs such as women's rights and should at best provide a cross cutting theme. The outcomes that are defined within the logframe need to be pinned down according to the programme activities so that the logic between outputs and outcomes is realistic, measurable and where attribution can be assessed or understood more comprehensively.

### ***From Purpose to Goal***

As we move up the logframe the logic becomes even thinner with the use of such large assumptions it is difficult to maintain the thread of the chain. The four purpose indicators which are discussed above namely: voice and accountability, women's rights, citizen participation, and citizen trust in NGOs are expected to translate into: the greater achievement of the MDG indicators through citizen's being able to claim their rights, which is to be monitored by the MDG progress report and the human rights indicators on the Mo Ibrahim Index. Again, any understanding of causation or attribution is not possible.

The goals that programmes set do need to operate at a high level to see how programmes can fit into wider environments and contribute to change that is bigger than the sum of its parts. However, a £13m programme of grant giving to civil society cannot expect to attribute causal linkages to Tanzania's realisation of the MDGs. For a start the realisation of the MDGs in Tanzania require huge investment in so many different aspects of society that a £13m programme is going to have little effect. Secondly the programme is not actually aimed at facilitating the achievement of the MDGs. It is targeting the strengthening of vertical accountability at its broadest – though even this is stretching the limits of the programme intervention.

If we bring the programme back to what it is actually doing it seems that the programme is increasing the capacity of civil society towards providing greater scrutiny of government budgeting processes. Further to this it is aiming at increasing transparency of government budgeting while trying to increase NGO participation in decision making processes and NGO capacity to campaign. For these reasons the goal of the programme should be made to fit accordingly. The goal of the programme is to increase the capacity of civil society along the thematic lines of the programme. This should be the goal of the programme but particularly the goal of the project management team who are going to be facilitating this process.

The logic of how the programme fits into wider vertical accountability structures, better governance, and ultimately better development outcomes should be documented in programme design phases and aligned with DFID's strategy. However, this does not need to be reflected in the monitoring of the programme. Monitoring needs to be pinned down to what you are really trying to achieve and made to fit with actor functions and the consequences of their actions. By pinning down the programme goal a monitoring and evaluation framework will provide a much more effective tool for learning and provide a greater opportunity to realise the outcomes a programme is trying to achieve.

Impact at the bottom is the responsibility of partner organisations who are receiving the capacity support. The goals of these activities need to be worked out separately in conjunction with partner organisations. The oversight role of the project management team should be to monitor the cumulative effects of these outcomes to measure impact. However, these need to be more carefully linked to organisational responsibilities with clear lines of control and responsibility.

Table 1 – Assumptions Between Outputs and Purpose

| Output 1  | Purpose  | Output 2  | Purpose   | Output 3   | Purpose                               | Output 4   | Purpose  |
|---|--|---|---|--|---------------------------------------|--|--|
| <p>Citizen’s access to information improved:</p> <p>1.1. Public access to key govt information</p> <p>1.2. CSOs produce high quality actionable information which is put in the public domain</p> <p>1.3. Partners achieving their progress markers/indicators relevant to this output</p>  | <p>Voice and Accountability</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Measured by WBI governance matters</li> </ul> | <p>CSO engagement in policy and budget formulation processes at local and national level:</p> <p>2.1. Citizen’s and CSOs make inputs into budget processes</p> <p>2.2. the effectiveness of citizen’s and CSO’s inputs in to local council decision making</p>  | <p>Citizen Participation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Attend a demonstration or protest</li> <li>Joined others to raise issue at least once in the last year</li> </ul> <p>Measured by Afrobarometer</p> | <p>Strengthened CSO monitoring of service delivery and public resource management:</p> <p>3.1. CSO campaigns</p> <p>3.2. Corruption in government and public officials</p> <p>3.3. Partners achieving their targets/progress markers that are relevant to this output</p>  | <p>Women’s Rights Measured by MII</p> | <p>Improved understanding by civil society of what works in strengthening accountability and fighting corruption:</p> <p>4.1. Quality of political and socio-economic analysis in CSO advocacy</p> <p>4.2. Linkages made by CSOs with Parliament and the media</p> <p>4.3. CSO partners, achieving their targets/progress markers that are relevant to this output</p> | <p>Citizen trust in NGOs Measured by REPOA</p> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>That there will be government willingness to increase transparency</li> <li>That CSOs will be able to produce actionable information</li> <li>That increasing transparency will increase accountability</li> <li>That increasing transparency will increase voice</li> <li>That WBI governance indicator data will reflect the same time period as that of implementation</li> <li>That WBI governance indicators will reflect programme activities</li> </ul> |  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>That increasing the participation of CSOs in budget formulation processes will empower individuals to increase political activism</li> <li>That CSO’s actually reflect citizen’s needs and wants</li> <li>That CSO’s are able to or are trying to encourage citizen’s to participate in local council decision making</li> <li>That CSO’s will have any influence over national budgeting processes</li> <li>That CSO’s engagement with government is any reflection of citizen participation</li> </ul> |   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>That women’s rights will be strengthened by less corruption in public service delivery</li> <li>That CSO campaigns will be able to leverage enough support to foster change</li> <li>That partner’s progress markers will ensure women’s rights as a programmatic area</li> </ul> |                                       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>That CSOs can increase trust by raising awareness of their activities</li> <li>That CSOs will effectively be able to run campaigns</li> <li>That CSOs will be able to produce results</li> <li>That CSOs will be able to gain citizen trust through more effective advocacy</li> </ul>  |  |

## **Summary**

Monitoring and evaluation in grant giving programmes needs to be carefully targeted towards the goals that are within reach of the intervention. Within governance and accountability programmes there is a tendency to attribute civil society activities to changes in government processes which may not always be realistic. Consequently it would be more appropriate to bring programme objectives in line with more effective civil society functioning and influence ensuring that organisations are better equipped to monitor their own impact and influence with government rather than assuming this responsibility at a programmatic level.

For these reasons it would be advisable to revise the logic of the logframe so that there are fewer leaps between levels to bring the purpose and goal of the programme closer to the functions of different actors involved in implementation.

The setting of indicators should avoid the use of information based on external national level data where evidence can only provide correlatory indications of impact. The use of outcome mapping within the programme can provide an invaluable source of internally generated evidence which can help to paint a much more accurate picture of what change is really occurring.

There needs to be a better consideration of the roles and responsibilities of different actors. The monitoring framework for the project management team should look substantially different to that of partner organisations.