

# Beyond Theories of Change: Working Politically for Transparency and Accountability

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[www.transparency-initiative.org](http://www.transparency-initiative.org)

# Background

- Transparency and Accountability Initiative (T/AI)
- TALEARN community of practice
  - <http://www.transparency-initiative.org/news/talearn-annual-workshop>
- Thinking and Working Politically (TWP)
  - <http://www.transparency-initiative.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/05/Thinking-and-Working-Politically.May-2014.pdf>

# Caveats

- Work in progress
- Generality vs. Specificity
- I want to learn, from you!

# Outline

- Defining TWP
- Working Politically
  - Theories of Change
  - Learning
  - Practice

# Thinking Politically

- Politics
  - Relationships
  - Power
- Examples: formal elections, community decision making on resources, informal relationships and power networks, incentives and organizational culture in public institutions
- Why politics?
  - <http://politicsgovernancedevelopment.wordpress.com/2013/10/23/politics-political-change-and-international-development/>
- How do your organizations think about politics?

# Thinking Politically

- Beyond Political Economy Analysis (PEA)
  - PEA: incentives, interests, constraints
    - Goal: behavior change of key actors
  - Political analysis: power, agency, structures, ideas
    - Goal: political change through navigating an evolving context
- Hudson and Leftwich:  
<http://www.dlprog.org/publications/from-political-economy-to-political-analysis.php>
- How does your organization analyze politics and power?

# Thinking Politically about Government Responsiveness

- Beyond Feedback Loops
  - One channel/mechanism for citizen-state interaction
  - Need to better unpack the ‘black box’ of responsiveness and accountability
  - Lots of assumptions about the relationships between transparency/openness, citizens/civil society, and more responsive and accountable governance
    - Especially around use of technology for citizen voice/gov responsiveness
      - <http://politicsgovernancedevelopment.wordpress.com/2014/07/03/closing-feedback-loops-again/>
- How does your organization unpack ‘government responsiveness’ and ‘political will’?

# Thinking Politically about Government Responsiveness

- Short vs Long Routes to Responsiveness + Accountability
  - Short route can, under the right circumstances, result in better service delivery
    - Which circumstances? See Kosack and Fung  
<http://www.archonfung.net/docs/articles/2014/FungKosack.AnnRevPSTransparencyGoverance2014.pdf>
    - But be careful <http://www.makingallvoicescount.org/blog/so-theres-a-short-code-route-of-accountability-really/>
  - But only long route can address equality, justice, rights, poverty...and service delivery
    - WDR 2004
    - <http://www.dlprog.org/opinions/politics-shape-services-and-services-shape-politics-.php>

# Thinking Politically about Government Responsiveness

- Accountability ecosystems
  - Mapping and analyzing actors, institutions, mechanisms and processes (state, civil society, citizen and social movements, external actors and initiatives)
    - E.g. elections, informal power relationships, parliamentary oversight, media watchdog, citizen protests, funding mechanisms, Open Government Partnership
    - International Budget Partnership
      - <http://internationalbudget.org/wp-content/uploads/IBP-Annual-Report-Final-web.pdf>
    - MAVC
    - Transparency and Accountability Initiative
- Who are the relevant actors, state and civil society, in your organization's accountability ecosystem?

# Thinking Politically: So What?

- Challenge of translating political thinking into politically-informed practice
  - Where to start?
  - How to work differently?

# Politically-Informed TOCs

- What is a TOC?
  - Framework for thinking about how change happens and what role an organization plays in contributing to change
    - Duncan Green
    - <http://oxfamblogs.org/fp2p/tag/how-change-happens/>
  - Theory, hypothesis or hunch?
    - Tiago Peixoto
    - <http://democracyspot.net/2014/02/08/the-problem-with-theory-of-change/>
- Does your organization have a TOC? How does it frame success, change and impact?

# Politically-Informed TOCs

- TOCs should integrate the available theory and evidence about how change happens
  - Collective action
    - <http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/14649880701371067#.U82HtPldVDA> (paywall)
  - Citizen-state relationships
    - <http://web.iaincirebon.ac.id/ebook/moon/Community-Citizen/Cornwall%20intro.pdf>
  - Power dynamics
    - [http://www.powercube.net/wp-content/uploads/2009/12/finding\\_spaces\\_for\\_change.pdf](http://www.powercube.net/wp-content/uploads/2009/12/finding_spaces_for_change.pdf)
- What kinds of evidence are relevant to your organization's TOC?

# Politically-Informed TOCs

- TOCs should be grounded in a realistic assessment of politics and power
  - Unpack ‘black boxes’, identify important assumptions
  - Deeper analysis and continuous ‘scanning’
- TOCs should be adaptable
  - Do assumptions hold true?
  - Has context shifted?
  - What new opportunities/constraints?
  - Need to integrate learning

# Politically-Informed TOCs

- What and How of change
  - Beyond Information + Participation = Accountability
    - Anuradha Joshi
    - <http://gpsaknowledge.org/events/gpsa-webinar-how-to-account-for-context-using-a-causal-chain-approach-in-social-accountability/>
  - Linear vs. non-linear change
    - Need to consider multiple potential pathways and scales
  - Beyond exclusive focus on formal institutions
    - Understand the informal and political dimensions
- How does your TOC envision change will happen? What are the assumptions in that framework?

# Learning

- Beyond Evaluation
  - Learning is more than doing research (or being researched)
  - Roche and Kelly
  - <http://www.dlprog.org/publications/monitoring-and-evaluation-when-politics-matters-notes-from-program-experience.php>
- Monitoring and 'real time' evaluation
  - International Budget Partnership
  - <http://internationalbudget.org/what-we-do/major-ibp-initiatives/learning-program/>

# Learning

- Ongoing political analysis
- Reflecting on practice and experience
- Culture of critical inquiry
- Learning practices, capacities, processes, strategies
- GPSA
  - <http://gpsaknowledge.org/forums/topic/what-how-and-why-to-monitor-and-learn-from-social-accountability-projects/>
- What does learning mean to you? How does your organization learn? How does it integrate learning into practice?

# Learning: Incentives

- How are funding priorities, strategies, processes and relationships encouraging and supporting learning?
  - Or are there disincentives for learning?
    - Encouraging adaptation or pre-defined outputs and objectives?
    - M&E focused on accountability to donor or organizational learning?
    - Reporting as ‘I did what I said I would do’ or ‘I did what made the most sense, and here’s why’?
      - <http://alghoso.org/2013/01/16/pritchett-feedback-loops-and-the-accountability-conundrum/>
    - Hewlett and T/AI study
- How does GPSA encourage (or discourage) learning?

# Politically-Informed Practice

- Mwananchi programme <http://www.mwananchi-africa.org/>
  - Not simply a matter of citizens holding public representatives to account, but rather a more complex set of relationships between diverse actors in which mutual trust is key to facilitating shared expectations and collective action
  - Local partners as ‘political entrepreneurs’ not ‘grant implementers’
  - Complex, and potentially conflicting, incentives that influence citizens and government representatives
  - Need to analyze which actors can affect change, and the incentives that influence them doing so or not (develop this capacity)
  - Navigate complex contextual dynamics, and create flexible and adaptable theories of how change can happen that are informed by political analysis

# Politically-Informed Practice

- SAVI (State Accountability Voice Initiative) Nigeria  
<http://savi-nigeria.org/>
  - Building local capacity for analyzing political context and shaping their strategies and tactics accordingly
  - Working with broad collection of actors from both state and society
  - Mixed teams at local level facilitating and mentoring collaborative action around priorities of both government and citizens
  - Foster skills, knowledge, networks and working relationships that effectively engage citizens in governance

# Politically-Informed Practice

- TOC, Evidence, Learning/Reflection, and Iteration/Adaptation
  - Too much emphasis on first two elements and not enough on last two?
- Reflection and adaptation
  - Lessons learned
  - Evolving context
  - Joining together evidence, reflection, analysis to inform strategy

# Politically-Informed Practice

- Tactical Approaches
  - Linear, short-term, one scale, isolated, ‘project’
- Strategic Approaches
  - Multiple tools/entry points, long-term, vertically integrated, coalitions, campaigns
- Why strategic approaches?
  - Supported by evidence
    - Jonathan Fox
    - <http://issuu.com/thegpsa/docs/social-accountability-04-13>
    - <http://www.transparency-initiative.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/Jonathan-Fox-Presentation2.pdf>
- Does your organization/project work more tactically, or more strategically? What are the trade-offs in this approach?

# Politically-informed Practice

- Challenge for funders
  - Defining and measuring success and impact
  - (Dis)Incentivizing learning and adaptation
  - Political change ‘projects’?
  - NGO-ization
    - What about other actors, movements, goals
    - TALEARN work on social movements

# Final Words

- Rakesh Rajani, Twaweza
- <http://youtu.be/dSnQ6gFGyZc>

# Thank You!

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