

MAKING ALL VOICES COUNT RESEARCH AND EVIDENCE STRATEGY

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Making All Voices Count is a citizen engagement and accountable governance programme. It aims to harness the transformative potential of unusual partnerships and innovative applications of communication technologies to contribute to fundamental change in the relationship citizens have with the state. It focuses the majority of its work in six priority countries – Ghana, Indonesia, Kenya, the Philippines, South Africa and Tanzania.

An exceptional feature of Making All Voices Count is the inclusion of a significant Research, Evidence and Learning (REL) component – led by the Institute of Development Studies (IDS) – as an integral part of a mainly operational programme. This component offers an opportunity to build a unique base of evidence on what works in using technology for citizen voice, transparency and accountability, and on how and why it works.

This document presents Making All Voices Count's Research and Evidence Strategy, which is periodically revised during the lifetime of the programme. It focuses on the most relevant and useful contributions the REL component can make, and outlines how the component will be delivered.

Making All Voices Count is based on a theory of change (ToC). The programme arises from the recognition of a series of challenges relating to citizen voice and government accountability and responsiveness, and a series of opportunities to enhance existing work on citizen voice, transparency, accountability and government responsiveness through the use of new technologies. Through investing various inputs, the programme aims to produce innovative solutions and influential evidence and learning, and to catalyse action in these areas on a global scale. A range of intermediaries, opinion-shapers and decision-makers will take up innovations, learning and evidence. Change agents in society and in government will be mobilised to engage with each other, and innovators and investors will respond by developing approaches to further citizens' interests and the public good, and improving enabling conditions for the kinds of innovation that support these approaches.

If this ToC plays out in practice during the lifetime of the programme, Making All Voices Count is expected to deliver improved relationships and increased opportunities for constructive dialogue in the programme's six priority countries, each taking a slightly different focus. In the best cases this will deliver a degree of co-governance between citizens and government. In these ways, Making All Voices Count will contribute to enabling all people – including those who are poor and marginalised – to call public and private institutions to account over their rights and the issues that matter to them most.

A review of key literature has provided some clear directions for understanding the focus and scope of Making All Voices Count, and for considering how the REL component should position itself and what it should focus on. Recent evidence has been considered on themes including: strategic approaches to social accountability;

whether information and communication technologies can close accountability gaps; different types of transparency and their role in improving governance; the importance of context; and the dominance of accountability, transparency, participation and inclusion in contemporary development discourse. Based on this review and on the programme's ToC, the following overarching research themes and questions have been identified as priorities for Making All Voices Count to explore:

Learning from the first generation of transparency and accountability, citizen voice and government responsiveness initiatives

- Conceptual work to flesh out the theoretical and conceptual basis for understanding citizen-led accountability and accountable, responsive governance (whether tech-enabled or not) and shaping it in practice, to enhance effectiveness and impact.

Government responsiveness

- What makes government actors targeted by technology for transparency and accountability initiatives (Tech4TAIs) change their behaviour and act responsively?
- What makes a transparency and accountability (T&A) 'champion'?
- What kinds of citizen engagement lead to what kind of government responsiveness?

Exclusion and inclusion

- Who are 'hard-to-reach' potential users or currently non-users of Tech4TAIs?
- What successful experiences exist of reaching 'hard-to-reach' citizens in ways that have contributed to transformative change in their situations?
- Which social differences or exclusions are narrowed by technology, which are exacerbated, and which are unaffected?

Citizen engagement in a time of technology

- What is known so far from the 'first generation' of transparency and accountability initiatives (TAIs) that is relevant to tech-enabled transparency, accountability, voice and responsiveness work?
- What happens to citizen engagement and voice when it is aggregated, mediated or represented through technological innovations, questioning assumptions and exploring risks?

Scaling up, scaling down or scaling out?

- What is known about scaling as a transformative strategy, and how does it apply in this field?
- On what basis should decisions be taken to support the scaling of a tech innovation in the field of citizen voice and government responsiveness, and how should the most appropriate form and level of scaling be designed?

These themes frame the REL component's two main purposes – 'programme learning' and 'evidence- and theory-building' – which are fulfilled through supporting primary and secondary research with and for three major stakeholder groups: practitioners, scholars and funders of Tech4TAls and T&A programmes. A model of the pathways of research, evidence and learning maps each of these onto the programme's three levels of operational activity – project, country and programme. At each level, the REL component prompts and facilitates programme stakeholders to engage in cycles of planning, experiencing, reflecting and learning. These cycles include several key activity areas: grant making; brokering; capacity development and mentoring; research uptake and communication; and monitoring, evaluation and learning.

Making All Voices Count research **grants** contribute to deeper understandings and a more extensive evidence base on why, when and how different interventions work. There are three streams of research – third-party, practitioner and IDS – each of which prioritise different research questions and issues. A small number of third-party grants are awarded in each focal country to contribute to evidence- and theory-building by filling specific knowledge gaps at the country level. Practitioner research grants fund research, mostly integrated into projects supported by the programme's innovation and scaling components, that contribute to improving the quality of practice, building an evidence base and testing hypotheses, propositions and assumptions from the ToC and the wider T&A field. Other funding supports IDS research with the objective of continually testing and fleshing out the ToC and keeping the programme's research and implementation strategies abreast of relevant developments in practice, knowledge and evidence across the field.

Making All Voices Count's Research, Evidence and Learning component will continue to host **brokering** events – including its annual Inspiration and Learning Event. At these the component programme brings together different actors from the T&A and Tech4T&A sectors to present and discuss state-of-the-art knowledge about how initiatives in the sector are actually making all voices count. Such brokering initiatives identify what else these actors need to know, and what the programme should prioritise in research and evidence-building over the coming years.

The main **capacity building** carried out under the REL component is via the **mentoring** and accompaniment of funded research partners – particularly practitioners in the Making All Voices Count focus countries – by programme staff and members of the programme's Research Outreach Team. Some mentoring is virtual, and some is face-to-face during short visits. The focus is on action and applied research with a strong learning focus. Given the scarcity of strong traditions of critical and reflective practice in the development aid sectors of the Making All Voices Count countries, we expect that a crucial input from the REL team will be the nurturing of these traditions, which in the long run will raise the quality of the growing evidence base. It may also prove possible to develop 'research cohorts' of Making All Voices Count-funded practitioner research partners who pass together through purpose-designed learning cycles to consolidate and enrich their learning throughout the process by reflecting on their own and each others' experience.

The programme's range of research uptake and communication activities includes identifying, understanding and engaging its audience, researching the relevant stakeholders to understand their attitudes and behaviours in relation to T&A and the opportunities and barriers to their use of evidence in decision-making and practice. Funded research partners are supported to design and implement effective research uptake and communication.

MAVC's internal **monitoring, learning and evaluation** system, managed from within the Research, Evidence and Learning component, works in synergy with research and evidence activities and with an external independent evaluation unit. It aims to meet all the diverse programme accountability and learning-related needs of this complex programme. The system is designed to supply the programme's accountability reporting functions; collate and make sense of monitoring data gathered across the programme and turn it into meaningful opportunities for learning by a range of actors internal and external; and drive reflective learning processes through which programme actors and stakeholders learn on a range of levels and scales.

Making All Voices Count is an innovative programme which combines an unusual set of strengths and activities to achieve a challenging set of outcomes in a complex field. It needs to approach its task with humility and a will to reflect and learn. This document presents the programme's Research and Evidence Strategy as it stands after 23 months of operation. This period has included intensive inception activities, rapid piloting and revisiting of the programme's original theory of action, and significant changes in the programme's delivery model and structure.

Among these changes, the number of REL staff has been brought up to the necessary level to deliver the component's commitments. As the activities outlined above are implemented through the programme's third and fourth years, REL staff will continue to reflect with their Making All Voices Count consortium colleagues on how the various dimensions of the Research and Evidence Strategy are unfolding, and will refresh it periodically as necessary. We will be seeking to learn from the experience of implementation, and to blend our learning into future REL activities, both within Making All Voices Count, and in the broader field of citizen voice and government responsiveness and accountability.

I INTRODUCTION

Making All Voices Count is a citizen engagement and accountable governance programme. It aims to harness the transformative potential of unusual partnerships and innovative applications of communication technologies to contribute to fundamental change in the relationship citizens have with the state. Ultimately, Making All Voices Count intends to foster changes that allow all people, including the poor and marginalised, to engage with public and private institutions and call them to account over the issues that matter to them most.

An exceptional feature of Making All Voices Count is the inclusion of a significant Research, Evidence and Learning (REL) component as an integral part of a mainly operational programme on citizen engagement and government accountability and responsiveness. This is in addition to an external Evaluation Management Unit (EMU) tasked with evaluating the implementation and impact of all components of the programme. The REL component, led by the Institute of Development Studies (IDS), one of the three fund management consortium partners, represents a considerable opportunity to build an evidence-base on what works in technology for voice, transparency and accountability, how, and why.

This document sets out key aspects of Making All Voices Count's Research and Evidence (R&E) strategy.¹ It draws on principles and definitions sketched out at the start of the programme and is enriched by the staff's reflections and learning during the first year of operations. It presents the programme's current **understanding** of research and evidence, their various **purposes** in the multi-stakeholder context of Making All Voices Count, and the programme's **roles** in conducting and promoting these. It outlines the **forms of support** we can provide for research and evidence-building, as well as how these activities and forms of support relate to the programme's overall **Theory of Change (ToC)** and **country plans** in Making All Voices Count's six priority countries.² It is written by IDS, as the consortium partner responsible for the REL component.

The REL component is building an evidence-base from a position of integration with Making All Voices Count's Global Innovation Competition, Country Programme and Catalysing Global Action. These provide a basis for the REL component's research, evidence-building and learning activities in several ways. Each of them convenes a range of actors who are potential users, interlocutors and participants of these activities. Each of these sets of actors also stands to benefit from research and evidence generated outside the Making All Voices Count programme. The REL component can facilitate their access to and use of these.

¹ A Making All Voices Count Learning Strategy was drafted in February 2014. The programme's learning element has been adopted by IDS only recently. It will be worked into this strategy and a revised version published in due course.

² Ghana, Indonesia, Kenya, Philippines, South Africa, Tanzania .

In keeping with the consortium's adaptive and learning approach to managing the programme, we expect to revise this document periodically. As the programme moves forward, the strategy will need to be refreshed to reflect advances in the fields of citizen engagement and government responsiveness, both in the literature and in practice. It will also need to reflect learning and re-focusing within the programme over time.

Section two sets out the programme's Theory of Change (ToC), including some glimpses of the country contexts in which the programme's work is focused. **Section three** presents a brief overview of the field, based on a review of key recent literature purposively selected as reasonably representative of the current state of knowledge. At the end of the section, emerging research themes and issues are identified as priorities for Making All Voices Count to explore, on the basis of the foregoing ToC and overview of the field, and the country plans drawn up by Making All Voices Count over the period September 2014 – February 2015. In **Section four** we define research and evidence and explain how we understand their role in the changes the programme seeks, setting out their purpose and the range of actors we expect the REL component to engage with in various roles. This includes presenting Making All Voices Count's emergent REL model, which shows how research, evidence and learning activities map onto the programme's different levels of operational activity and what the REL component will do to generate, bring in and spin off research, evidence or learning at each level. **Section five** outlines the resources at the programme's disposal for conducting and supporting REL. **Section six** concludes.

2 WHAT THIS PROGRAMME IS ABOUT

This section sets out the programme's Theory of Change (ToC)³, followed by a brief overview of the country contexts in which Making All Voices Count's work is focused, based on country plans drawn up by the programme over the period September 2014 – February 2015.

The programme arises from the recognition of, on the one hand, a series of challenges relating to citizens' voice and government accountability and responsiveness, and on the other hand, a series of opportunities to enhance existing work on citizen voice, transparency, accountability and government responsiveness through the use of new technologies.

Through investing various inputs (grants and other support for tech-enabled voice and accountability initiatives, grants and support for conducting research and building evidence, and networking and stimulation of these fields of activity at the global level), the programme aims to produce innovative solutions with greater reach, and evidence and learning with greater influence, and to catalyse and marshal action to these ends on a global scale.

As a result, a range of intermediaries, opinion-shapers and decision-makers will take up Making All Voices Count-type innovations, learning and evidence: change agents in society and in government will be mobilised to engage with each other; and innovators and investors will respond by developing approaches to further the public good and citizens' interests and generally improve the enabling conditions for the kinds of innovation that further these.

If during the lifetime of the programme all these things can be made to happen, Making All Voices Count is expected to deliver improved relationships, increased opportunities for constructive dialogue and in the best cases, a degree of co-governance between citizens and governance in the six focus countries. That way, it will have contributed to enabling all people, including poor and marginalised people, to engage public and private institutions and call them to account over their rights and the issues that matter to them most.

As can be seen from the above summary of the programme theory of change (ToC), various 'impact pathways' will be travelled on the way from programme inputs to outcomes and impact. Some of these are well-established impact pathways – their validity has been well proven in earlier citizen voice, accountable governance and transparency programmes, but is yet to be tested in the context of such a heavy emphasis on enabling citizen voice and government responsiveness through technological means. Other impact pathways are not yet tested: in particular, the one that leads from the funding of innovative tech solutions by a programme such as Making All Voices Count to a situation where tech innovators and investors are developing approaches to further the public good and citizens' interests, and generally improving the enabling conditions for this sort of innovation. In teasing out the way

³ The programme ToC is represented graphically in the Annex.

Making All Voices Count will put this ‘tech innovation impact pathway’ to the test, it is helpful to unpack the ‘governance impact pathways’ in the programme ToC to see better how enabling citizen voice and government responsiveness *through tech innovation* might boost their effectiveness and impact. We turn to this for the remainder of this section.

ACTIVE CITIZENSHIP AND GOVERNMENT RESPONSIVENESS

One way of viewing the governance relationship between citizens and government is to think about government as the provider or guarantor of services to meet the needs of the population, and citizens as users of these services. Many attempts to improve the quality or extension of services are based on citizens providing feedback to governments (or service providers sub-contracted by governments) on whether they are providing the right services, to enough people, of a sufficient quality. Ideally, governments then respond by making the necessary changes. When government does change its actions in response, this is sometimes referred to as a ‘closed feedback loop’. Many tech innovations that aim to boost citizen voice seek to do so by closing the feedback loop.

Another, complementary way of understanding the governance relationship is as a relationship based on people’s rights and responsibilities as citizens, and governments’ accountability or responsibility for providing, respecting and fulfilling citizens’ rights. This rights-based perspective embraces the full range of government responsibilities arising from core state functions⁴: a much wider range than basic service delivery. It also embraces relations *among* citizens in connection with these rights and responsibilities, as well as the relationships *between* citizens and governments. An important aspect of governance thus understood is the provision by government of transparent information, available and accessible to people, both as an end (or right) in itself, and a means to enabling other rights to be secured. With such information, theoretically citizens know what their rights and entitlements are, and are empowered to make demands and hold their government accountable for its responsibilities. When government delivers on citizens’ demands for rights and answerability, it is being accountable or responsive in relation to its responsibilities.

Within this rights-based view, citizens also have responsibilities, to the state and to each other. A rights perspective is not an alternative to the needs-based perspective outlined above. Rather, a governance relationship based on rights and responsibilities is a particular approach to the satisfaction of needs and the fulfilment of rights, usually associated with liberal democratic polities. A programme intending to enhance government responsiveness and accountability to citizens’ voices could limit itself to the level of responsiveness and accountability for satisfying citizens’ needs for basic

⁴ Core state functions are generally taken to be a monopoly over the legitimate use of force; revenue generation; safety, security and justice; basic service delivery; and economic governance. See <http://www.gsdrc.org/go/fragile-states/chapter-5--state-building-in-fragile-contexts/state-functions-and-legitimacy>

services (a fairly ‘functional’ level of governance), or could take in the wider range of rights and responsibilities spanned by a rights-based perspective on governance (a more ‘transformative’ level of governance).

The Making All Voices Count ToC refers to the mobilisation and engagement of both citizen and government change agents as well as intermediaries of various kinds. Making All Voices Count is working within a rights-based perspective broadly speaking, in which people’s rights to safety, security and justice as well as basic services are to be secured through active citizenship and government responsiveness, facilitated by technologies, among other means.

THE PROCESSES AND RELATIONSHIPS OF GOVERNANCE

Both governments and the citizenry are made up of a range of different people. Amongst citizens there are many differences, such as ethnicity, gender, disability, sexuality, wealth, status, or whether people live in urban or rural areas. These differences are far from neutral in their effects, and often come with differences in power. Each citizen’s identity is made up of several aspects at once. It is important to recognise that differences in power exist *within* as well as *between* these different groups.

Similarly, the government has many layers and levels (local, municipal district, provincial, national, international, etc.). Much of what happens at the national level depends on the international level. Much of what happens at the local level is dictated by national policies. As well as having several different levels, ‘government actors’ are of many different kinds: some are elected political representatives and some are bureaucrats or technicians who have secured positions in the civil service.

Not every citizen in a country relates directly to their government, and not every act or aspect of governance needs such direct interaction. People get information and understand their rights through intermediaries and ‘info-mediaries’, such as the media or open data initiatives. Similarly, citizens can voice their needs and demands, and claim their rights, through groups or associations. Governments often deliver services through intermediaries, key among which are private sector actors and non-governmental organisations (NGOs). They may provide information to citizens through ‘info-mediaries’.

The processes and relationships of governance are as important as the actors involved. Increasingly, scholarly and practical attempts to understand and affect the ways citizens and governments relate to each other place emphasis on the processes and relationships, rather than any of the actors in isolation. Several factors are required for all of these processes and relationships to work well – for example, good information flows, and citizens’ trust in their government. The current surge of technologically enabled forms of voice and responsiveness is affecting the nature and implications of these processes and relationships, in ways that the Making All Voices Count programme ‘bets on’ (through its granting and learning support to tech initiatives) while also seeking to understand better (through its research).

WHAT DO THE FOCAL ISSUES OF MAKING ALL VOICES COUNT LOOK LIKE IN SIX COUNTRY CONTEXTS?

Above we have unpacked how we, in Making All Voices Count, understand governance; how citizens, governments and other relevant actors (notably private sector actors) relate to each other; and the relationships and processes through

which the programme works in order to attain its desired impact. The programme's desired impact, its actions and its assumptions and ideals together make up its ToC. The impact Making All Voices Count aims for is improved relationships and increased opportunities for constructive dialogue (at least) and co-governance (at best) between citizens and governments in six focus countries.

In 2014, Making All Voices Count commissioned country context analyses from country-expert consultants, as inputs for determining how the programme will be made operational in each priority country. In the resulting country plans, these experts' analyses of relevant aspects of country contexts are drawn on by Making All Voices Count to make choices about the particular issues and problems on which the programme's resources and activities focus in each country. They outline preferred areas of intervention, identify likely challenges and existing opportunities, and lay out the options open to Making All Voices Count, stakeholders and partners in efforts to seek technological and policy innovation, scale good ideas and capture the kind of evidence and learning that is valuable to a global audience. The plans reflect tension between the need to set some boundaries around where the programme proposes to make a difference, and the need for a programme that makes grants largely in responsive mode to maintain some latitude in terms of its thematic and geographic areas of focus. Thus the 'focuses' are in some cases very broad.

GHANA

While there has been structural devolution in Ghana, this has not resulted in fiscal and political decentralisation, with a third of all district assembly members appointed by the President. Generally, district assemblies are severely under-resourced, thus weakening their ability to deliver critical services.

Private radio stations and mobile telephones have played a particular role in deepening Ghanaian democracy. The urban, educated, non-poor are ready, willing and able to use social media to express themselves.

Making All Voices Count intends to focus on whose voices are being included and how their input is being incorporated in budgetary planning. The plan highlights that Making All Voices Count aims to capitalise on existing work and commitments made by the Ghanaian government as part of the Open Government Partnership (OGP).⁵ As such, open data is another one of the thematic focus areas. Owing to existing links with project partners, Making All Voices Count will work in the Upper East and Volta Regions. The two identified areas of focus will be Bolgatanga, the capital city of the Upper East region and Sogakope, a rural town in the Volta region, thereby allowing for the examination of two different contexts. Making All Voices Count will also aim to work with traditionally marginalised groups, and in particular women.

⁵ <http://www.opengovpartnership.org/>

SOUTH AFRICA

Extreme levels of inequality, high levels of unemployment, inadequate access to basic services, service delivery protests, a fragmented civil society and disillusionment with the ruling government characterise the social and political landscape in South Africa.

On the basis of the analysis in the South Africa country plan, the Making All Voices Count Team decided to focus on supporting innovations that promote citizen voice and government responsiveness for improved service provision at the local level. The programme aims to build on the *Municipal Financial Management Act* and *Municipal Structures Act*, which both promote and require public participation and access to information at the local level. Another focus is the government's Open Government Partnership (OGP) national action plan, which calls for the establishment of "Service Delivery Improvement Forums... to provide timely citizen report cards on service delivery at the community level". Making All Voices Count could potentially collaborate with Service Delivery Improvement Forums and community advice offices. In South Africa, Making All Voices Count's priority regions are Eastern Cape, Western Cape and Gauteng.

KENYA

Over the last 25 years, Kenya has undergone fundamental changes to its economic and political structures. Within this new political landscape, citizens' rights are often not acknowledged at the national level, with reliance being placed on the media and civil society groups to campaign against corruption and to push for transparency, justice and equitable development.

In an attempt to address regional inequalities and disparities, the 2010 Constitution decentralised certain administrative, political and fiscal functions to 47 county governments. These counties are required to facilitate public participation and involvement in its assemblies and committees. This process of devolution holds great hope for increasing citizen participation in decision-making, resolving allocation of resources and reducing marginalisation – but the success of devolution will depend on the will and ability of counties to engage citizens, and the will and ability of citizens to participate in political spaces.

As such, Making All Voices Count will focus on (i) obstacles to effective citizen action and effective government engagement at the local level and (ii) issues related to policy and national-level networks. The Making All Voices Count Team have identified six counties in Kenya to focus its attention: Turkana, Marsabit, Samburu, Kwale, Homa Bay, Makeni, and Murang'a – the first four because of their marginalisation, and the last two because of the existence of active citizen engagement processes at the county level.

TANZANIA

Tanzania has a three-tier government system, consisting of the central government, legally autonomous local government authorities and village authorities. The local government authorities deliver most basic services and operate jointly with the village authorities. The village level government authorities serve as focal points in the development planning process. High levels of poverty, illiteracy, inadequate access to information, language barriers and a low expectation of government responsiveness mean that the voices of ordinary citizens are not being heard and there is limited capacity to formally interact with government.

The programme aims to focus on government responsiveness for improved local service provision. Additionally, a massive parliamentary scandal involving the misappropriation of public funds generated from the energy sector offers an opportunity to explore participatory policymaking on sustainable energy. Making All Voices Count will be working with women's groups on this issue.

PHILIPPINES

The Philippine country plan highlights that years of dictatorship and colonialism have led to political elites being entrenched. However, Filipino civil society is strong and civil society organisations are considered to be the principal mechanisms through which citizens can demand accountability. For the past two decades, successive administrations have been strong proponents of e-governance, with the current regime publishing an *E-Government Master Plan*. One of the key factors shaping the governance context in the archipelago has been decentralisation. In 1991, the *Local Government Code* devolved the delivery of basic services and other critical functions to Local Government Units. Notwithstanding, the poorest segments of Filipino society are not having their voices heard and their needs are still not being prioritised.

Accordingly, one of the Making All Voices Count priorities in the Philippines is supporting grassroots participation in local planning and budgeting. As a result of the catastrophic effects of recent natural disasters in the Philippines, Making All Voices Count has also decided to focus on the development of participatory governance in building, sustaining and implementing community resilience to natural disaster.

INDONESIA

Since 1998, Indonesia has been a multi-party democracy but decades of oligarchy have left a legacy of corruption, maladministration and disempowered citizenry. In the post-authoritarian landscape, space for citizen-state engagement has opened up. In recent years, there has been an ongoing process of devolution of power to the regency, municipality and village levels. However, this has led to tensions between these tiers of government, with power struggles increasing between Islamist, military-based or ethnically-based groups.

Former President Yudhoyono has been a great champion of Technology for Transparency and Accountability (Tech4T&A) and the Open Government Partnership. Making All Voices Count has already been closely engaging with the Presidential Working Unit for Supervision and Management of Development. The 2008 *Ombudsman Law* and the 2009 *Public Service Delivery Law* have created opportunities for greater citizen oversight over public funds and services. However, there has been little citizen engagement with these processes at the local level.

As such, the Making All Voices Count country plan intends to focus on open data and local service delivery. The work in Indonesia will examine the current low levels of citizen engagement, challenges related to government responsiveness and the use of technology to advance the voice of all citizens, and in particular women and Indonesians living in the traditionally marginalised east of the country.

3 WHERE WE'RE STARTING FROM: A CONTEMPORARY OVERVIEW OF THE FIELD

The programme ToC is one important dimension of the background to this Research and Evidence (R&E) strategy. Another dimension is the current state of research and evidence on citizen engagement, government accountability and responsiveness, and technology for transparency and accountability (Tech4T&A).⁶

We present here a brief overview of the field, based on a review of key recent literature purposively selected as reasonably representative of the current state of knowledge as reflected in academic scholarship. A review of literature is, of course, not the same as a direct review of practice, which would be beyond the scope of the present exercise. We have selected literature by scholars who closely follow developments in practice, so that the items reviewed provide a good approximation to the state of practice as well as of research. At the end of the section, emerging research themes and issues are identified as priorities for Making All Voices Count to explore, on the basis of the foregoing ToC and overview of the field.

RE-READING THE EVIDENCE ON SOCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY

In his recent publication *Social Accountability: What does the evidence really say?* produced for the World Bank's Global Partnership on Social Accountability (2014), Fox re-reads the evidence on the impact of social accountability initiatives. Evaluations which find low impacts from social accountability work often conclude that the evaluated initiatives relied on certain key assumptions that turn out to be flawed: that local dissemination of service delivery outcome data would activate collective action, which would in turn improve service provider responsiveness; that local oversight of public works can by itself limit corruption; and that community participation is inherently democratic and not subject to elite capture. Initiatives that have proceeded under these assumptions Fox classifies as adopting a 'tactical' approach to social accountability (see Box 1, right).

⁶ Although a programme's ToC ideally would closely reflect the current state of the art in the relevant field, in practice the two are not always closely aligned. This can be due to various operational factors, such as, in a multi-annual programme like Making All Voices Count, a time-lapse between the point when the ToC was developed (or last revised) and the production of relevant evidence or research findings since that date.

BOX 1 FOX'S 'TACTICAL' AND 'STRATEGIC' SOCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY APPROACHES

Tactical social accountability approaches:

- Are bounded interventions (also known as tools)
- Are limited to localised, society-side efforts (voice-only)
- Assume that information provision alone will (a) inspire collective action with (b) sufficient power to influence public sector performance

Strategic social accountability approaches:

- Deploy multiple tactics (mutually reinforcing tools)
- Encourage enabling environments for collective action (reduce perceived threats)
- Coordinate citizen voice initiatives with governmental reforms that bolster public sector responsiveness

(Based on Fox 2014)

Initiatives which have 'learnt' from the weaknesses of such assumptions and thereby achieved more demonstrable impact he calls 'strategic' approaches. He finds that the body of evaluations showing mixed evidence of results generally relate to what he calls tactical approaches, whereas those focusing on strategic approaches offer much more promising evidence of impact. On this basis, Fox develops nine propositions:

- 1 Information needs to be user-centered to empower.
- 2 To be heard, voice needs representation as well as aggregation.
- 3 Recognise that voice can be constrained by the 'fear factor'.
- 4 Build in 'teeth' – shorthand for institutional capacity to respond to voice.
- 5 To break out of 'low accountability traps,' bring in vertical accountability.
- 6 Pathways out can either be voice-led or teeth-led, but both are needed.
- 7 [Social accountability] strategies need to address the 'squeezing the balloon' problem [that the targets of citizen or state oversight are flexible and can adapt by reconfiguring corruption or diverting advocacy attention].
- 8 That's why civil society oversight needs vertical integration.
- 9 Sandwich strategies [coordinated coalitions among pro-accountability actors embedded in both state and society] can shift power with state-society synergy (Fox 2014)

Fox sums up what works in social accountability by concluding that "voice needs teeth to have bite, but teeth may not bite without voice" (ibid). In a later presentation, unpacking what the evidence does not say, he asks why, after the launch of so many initiatives intended to make citizen voice close feedback loops, so few have actually closed.

CAN TECHNOLOGY BRIDGE THE ACCOUNTABILITY GAP?

Gigler and Bailur's (2014) edited volume addresses three questions:

- How do information and communication technologies (ICTs) empower citizens through participation, transparency and accountability?
- Are technologies an accelerator to close the *accountability gap* – the space between government and citizens that requires bridging for open and collaborative governance?
- Under what conditions does this occur?

The book aims to provide 'a base of evidence' for citizen engagement through ICTs in a number of case studies, plus some conceptual chapters which offer analytical frameworks for understanding and closing feedback loops through the use of ICTs.

The collection starts out to explore the link between citizen empowerment and technologies for closing feedback loops. Bailur and Gigler's conclusion in their introductory chapter confirms those of earlier works in affirming that:

“[i]n most cases [in their book], a key champion, political support, strong intermediaries, low cost or existent technology are critical factors. However, the evidence [...] also demonstrates that the challenges of elite capture, scale-out,⁷ gaps between design and reality and sustainability of pilots still exist.” (Ibid)

It has already been noted that evidence-focused debates and research in this field have been clouded by conceptual vagueness. The various cases in this volume make fairly extensive use of certain key concepts, in ways that reinforce the general sense of at best, conceptual breadth and at worst, vagueness in this field. Notably:

- ‘feedback loop’: the book’s usage varies. The dominant usage, especially in later chapters, is about aid beneficiaries’ feedback on development aid projects. This is a very particular usage, significantly different from, say, Kosack and Fung’s (2014) fine-grained exploration of feedback in the context of public services that has broad application in the field of governance and transparency and accountability (T&A), which is a more mainstream usage.
- ‘customer’, ‘client’, ‘beneficiary’ and ‘citizen’: parts of the book use these terms interchangeably. In fact, they invoke very different ‘governance statuses’. As each of these different ‘governance statuses’ would make for a very different kind of ‘accountability gap’, the clarity the book can offer on the ‘accountability gap’ is limited by this interchangeable use of the terms.

The cases reviewed include some of the well-known initiatives deploying technologies to promote transparency in service delivery, as well as some lesser known cases. It also includes the International Budget Partnership’s Open Budget Initiative, and the bundle of approaches known as participatory budgeting - in none of which technology purports to play a significant part in the closing of feedback loops.

All in all, rather than an evidence base, the book is a reminder of the importance of conceptual precision and case selection, so often taken too lightly in the field of Tech4T&A. Rather than answering the question posed by its initially confident tech-positive stance of ‘Do they?’ it points to the relevance of asking the more timid but sometimes more appropriate question of ‘*Can* they?’

DOES TRANSPARENCY IMPROVE GOVERNANCE?

Earlier work has highlighted the importance of context in determining which transparency and accountability initiatives (TAIs) ‘work’ and which do not. An article by Kosack and Fung (2014) builds on and deepens this earlier work. It starts with a taxonomy of four ‘varieties of transparency’, which is very helpful in disentangling distinct strands of a rapidly evolving and interlinked set of subfields. They locate their focus within one of these, which they call ‘transparency for accountability’ (differentiated from Freedom of Information, transparency for responsible corporate behaviour, and regulatory transparency). This is the one that most closely corresponds to Making All Voices Count’s sphere of interest: although it omits the ‘citizen voice’ aspect that is key in Making All Voices Count, it connects transparency initiatives to attempts to secure public sector accountability.

The authors recap Fung’s earlier work on the ‘transparency action cycle’ which lays out in generic terms the triggers that a transparency initiative needs to activate if the transparency is to become ‘useful’, in the sense of leading to improved public

⁷ Used to mean scaling-up or increasing the scale of use.

services. From here, they build a conceptual framework for explaining variations in success of TAs, which brings together (i) the transparency action cycle, (ii) the 'short' and 'long' routes of accountability as set out in the *World Development Report 2004* (World Bank 2004), and (iii) the willingness of service providers, policymakers and politicians to make improvements. Together these elements offer insights into contextual determinants of 'impact' in the sense of improved service delivery. The authors construct five 'worlds' representing various combinations of the key contextual variables in the conceptual framework.

Kosack and Fung then review sixteen experimental evaluations of transparency and accountability initiatives in an attempt to account for variations in their success in improving governance in the five different 'worlds'. They find that reforms will come about most easily in the 'world' characterised by competition between service providers, because there is a real choice for consumers or citizens to respond to newly transparent information by 'exiting' the provider if the provider does not respond swiftly by making improvements to services – so 'where individual exit is a powerful engine of improvement' (ibid). This is hardly a surprise, and is clearly a finding of limited use in developing country contexts, where, as the authors acknowledge, 'there simply is not meaningful competition between providers' (ibid). Here, they say, 'reform must rely on dynamics other than exit, such as contestation and collaboration' (ibid).

CONTEXT MATTERS

The recent surge in citizen-led accountability initiatives, Joshi (2013) points out, has been driven by a normative belief. So far, understanding of the importance and impact of context has been limited.

Joshi breaks down 'context' into the macro and the micro contextual factors. More has been written about the macro-context, which she states relates to 'the larger histories of citizen state engagement and related political processes.' The micro-context is identified as local drivers that impact social accountability interventions. Building on earlier work (e.g. McGee and Gaventa 2010) Joshi proposes that a causal chain or ToC can be a means of interpreting micro-contextual factors.

With regards to the micro-context, Joshi emphasises the need to understand the characteristics of each component of social accountability processes, and the causal chains through which social accountability processes connected to these broad components are intended to function. Joshi reminds us that the relationship from information to citizen action to state response is multidirectional. The nature of these components varies, which affects the process. Using the pathway from information to official response as an example, Joshi unpacks the nature of information, the substance of citizen action (levels of motivation, and substantive characteristics of citizen demands), and the substance of official response types.

Adopting a causal chain/ToC approach helps to deconstruct assumptions, and highlights which combination of approaches might work in particular contexts and therefore points out where potential blockages arise. The paper provides a checklist that can be used to consider the potential success of new or existing social accountability interventions through unpacking the micro-context. Moreover, this approach allows us to understand the trajectory of existing social accountability interventions through their journey along the causal chain. This approach also allows key obstacles to be identified.

THE FUNDAMENTALS OF TECH4T&A

Commissioned by the Transparency and Accountability Initiative (T/AI), 'Fundamentals for Using Technology in Transparency and Accountability Organisations' is a relatively jargon-free resource paper targeted at non-technical audiences in organisations pursuing transparency and accountability (T&A) (Slater 2014). It addresses the ambitious task of assisting transparency and accountability organisations to plan, implement and evaluate tech projects. This makes its remit very broad, spanning everything from developing a tech strategy to hiring a tech developer, with some sacrifice of depth for breadth.

The paper highlights how important it is for such organisations to assess their capacity, identify *why* they are implementing tech projects and *how* these projects contribute to their overall organisational aims, and to evaluate tech projects throughout their lifecycle. A major emphasis is the management of expectations: the paper urges a realistic approach towards tech innovation, adoption and the potential impact of TAs. Slater encourages T&A organisations to build capacity at the early stages of the project and remain flexible throughout the project.

A checklist is provided for funders of T&A organisations, covering issues such as the needs, capacities and incentives of stakeholders, underlying assumptions that need to be made explicit, project resourcing, and the long-term viability of the project. General principles for funding, such as flexibility, providing good feedback, building in support for ongoing learning and evaluation, and connecting grantees, are outlined.

ARE ACCOUNTABILITY, TRANSPARENCY, PARTICIPATION AND INCLUSION A NEW DEVELOPMENT CONSENSUS?

The incisive analysis of the current state of 'four key principles' (accountability, transparency, participation and inclusion) by Carothers and Brechenmacher (2014) directly addresses Making All Voices Count (among others) as emblematic of the way the four principles dominate not only policy documents and the international discourse over donor-aid relations, but also high-profile donor-funded initiatives. Starting by acknowledging their status as 'inherently, even unquestionably good things' for which there is powerful 'intrinsic case' and a no less powerful 'instrumental case', they then lay bare the significant fissures lying beneath the concepts' ubiquitous popularity and privileged status. The questions they address are '[...] whether they really bridge longstanding ideological and operational divides within the aid community, whether or not they represent a unified and coherent agenda, and how deep the donor commitment to these concepts truly is in practice.'

When discussing critically the fissure related to agendas (i.e. whether there is one agenda uniting these four concepts or in fact several different agendas) they point out:

'Different aid organisations or groups within them pursue very different relatively emphases on the four principles. For example, enthusiastic proponents of the growing transnational movement for accountability and transparency view these issues as a potentially transformative advance of the governance agenda and one that naturally connects to burgeoning efforts to harness new Internet and communications technologies for development ends.'

However, other organisations, or other groups within the same aid organisations, do not see this the same way.

Other fissures the authors explore are:

- ‘The problem of ‘superficial application’, in which aid agencies frequently treat the four principles as boxes to be ticked rather than genuinely transformative propositions to be pursued as long-term change processes. Here they point out that an initial rush to foster transparency in different arenas of state action ‘is quickly giving way to the realization that achieving meaningful development impact this way is a considerably more complex and uncertain process than many aid providers had initially realized.’ Likewise, they warn about the ‘frequent conflation of open data technologies and the politics of open government’, and point out that in fact it is perfectly possible for deeply opaque and unaccountable governments to provide ‘open data’ on politically neutral topics;
- ‘The Unsettled Intrinsic case’: the authors explode the myth that there is a universal acceptance of the intrinsic value of accountability, transparency, participation and inclusion;
- ‘Divisions over the Instrumental case’: persistent doubts over whether the principles enhance the developmental impact of aid are rehearsed here. The ‘limited and generally inconclusive’ nature of the evidence base is pointed to as exacerbating this problem. Ultimately, Carothers and Brechenmacher admit, ‘[...] practitioners still know very little about the types of interventions and the broader governance structures and power dynamics needed for work on these four concepts to have a lasting developmental impact.’

All told, they conclude, the apparent consensus around accountability, transparency, participation and inclusion is illusory and building one should be understood as work in progress.

WHAT THE LITERATURE MEANS FOR MAKING ALL VOICES COUNT MOVING FORWARD

For the Making All Voices Count REL component, this quick review of six contemporary references from the citizen voice, T&A and Tech4T&A literatures provides some clear directions as to how we should understand the programme’s focus and scope, how the REL component should position itself, what the REL component should focus on, and how the REL component should proceed so as to deliver what is needed. We respond below to the first three of these and draw this section to a close by distilling from them, the research themes and questions that Making All Voices Count will prioritise. The fourth (how the REL component should proceed to deliver what is needed) is the focus of Sections four and five.

In terms of the Making All Voices Count **programme’s focus and scope**, we need to note that current discourse and practice in the Tech4T&A sub-field is focused at the level of initiatives that purport to close feedback loops – using an approach which focuses on achieving changes at the ‘functional’ level, and only addresses weakness in ensuring basic service provision to all citizens. It does not take on board other important state functions like those related to authority, legitimacy, monopoly of the legitimate use of violence, and safeguarding population’s security and human rights. Improved services are important, above all for those without access to basic services, but the governance transformations the world needs extend far beyond them.

Even while focusing on supporting innovation and scaling initiatives of a functional kind, we also need to be mindful of how few projects aimed at closing feedback loops

in service provision can convincingly demonstrate success. While part of the problem is a scant evidence-base, it is also due to weaknesses in design and implementation of the initiatives. If Making All Voices Count wants to make a difference at the level of the initiatives it is currently funding, we need to work with our key actors to address these weaknesses and help ensure feedback loops actually get closed. However, if the programme wants to make a difference at more transformative levels of the governance relationship as well as the functional level, the evidence suggests that it needs to actively seek out and support initiatives which are ‘strategic’, not ‘tactical’, as well as ensure that ‘tactical’ initiatives supported are embedded and integrated into wider-ranging ‘strategic’ initiatives. Recent shifts in the programme’s innovations and scaling granting approach – from one based predominantly on competition to a more ‘collaborative’ and brokered way of working – give the programme new space for this diversification in grant-making.

In an era of high enthusiasm for tech innovation, it is easy to lose sight of the fact that Making All Voices Count is a governance programme favouring tech approaches, rather than a tech programme with some governance connections. Simultaneous with juggling the many challenges of supporting tech innovation in a relatively unfamiliar terrain, the programme therefore also needs to respond to the challenges found at the cutting-edge of the governance field. Some of these are conceptual and relate to the co-existence of multiple kinds and aims of T&A, citizen voice and openness-related efforts; and second, the relationships between transparency, accountability, participation and inclusion. Three of the reviewed sources (Joshi 2014; Kosack and Fung 2014; Carothers and Brechenmacher 2014) offer new elements of conceptual clarity on these challenges at the cutting-edge of governance, critically important at this early stage in the theory-building process in a new sub-field such as Tech4T&A. Kosack and Fung’s taxonomy of four different varieties of transparency is a helpful contribution to a field where conceptual precision is overdue. The work provides conceptually clear, systematic, experimentally-based evidence on what has been for many (including researchers working on citizen voice and accountability from within a citizenship paradigm⁸), a ‘common-sense’ assumption.

The programme, and particularly the REL component, needs to reflect and respond to these conceptual evolutions in the governance field. In particular we need to heed ‘the temptation to act as though the agreement around [the normatively ‘good’ concepts of transparency, accountability, participation and inclusion] is stronger than it really is – and [to] be willing to face head on the many lasting fissures and look for ways to reduce them’ (Carothers and Brechenmacher 2014). Whether consensus is generated around the four principles depends on ‘how effectively its proponents deepen their understanding of how to put the four concepts into practice, share that understanding clearly across all parts of the assistance community, and bridge the divide between donors and recipients on these issues’ (ibid). This offers important pointers for Making All Voices Count’s learning function. As a programme which re-grants to civil society organisations and private sector actors as well as government actors, the most relevant divide Making All Voices Count has to deal with, is probably that between practitioners and the rest (researchers, government decision-makers, and funding agencies). In practice, there continue to be significant leaps of faith linking these concepts in many Tech4T&A initiatives and tech-based governance initiatives. The REL component needs to continue engaging with longstanding questions about the relationships between these, in both tech-enabled and non-tech-enabled TAIs.

⁸ See for example www.drc-citizenship.org

The dominant message for Making All Voices Count from this literature is the need for realism and clarity of objectives in using innovative technologies to pursue T&A, citizen voice and government accountability and responsiveness objectives. It is better for change agents to start with the impact they want to achieve and design a tech strategy based on a clear objective, than to work the other way around. Making All Voices Count often comes across projects or ideas which work the other way round, or which do not explicitly consider whether the technology in question is definitely the optimal way of achieving the change they seek. Realism is equally needed at the level of funders, as is the recognition that funding practices are not neutral in the field of Tech4T&A: there are good funding practices and less good ones. By adopting a reflective and reflexive approach to grant-making and taking care to avoid replicating existing bad practices, Making All Voices Count can become a principled and good-practice funder and can help its funders, in turn, to do the same.

HOW THE REL COMPONENT OF MAKING ALL VOICES COUNT SHOULD POSITION ITSELF

Our overview of the current state of knowledge does not turn up substantial new evidence of impact of TAls and Tech4TAls compared to previous works (Fox 2014; Gigler and Bailur 2014; McGee and Gaventa 2011). This suggests that the evidence-base is still insubstantial and patchy. So far, the scant evidence of successful tech innovations intended to close service delivery feedback loops has not tempered the general enthusiasm for developing and supporting such innovations, including among Making All Voices Count stakeholders and grant applicants. The REL component needs to continue to generate evidence to fill gaps, and to highlight on the basis of evidence where feedback loops are and are not being closed, how and why. It can do this within a broader attempt to promote more serious attitudes towards the generation of evidence and readings of the existing evidence by: i) encouraging greater rigour in use of language, thinking and practice, ii) making existing evidence readily available and useable for practitioners, and iii) developing critical reflective approaches to practice and evidence among Making All Voices Count tech grantees working at the feedback loop level.

Fung et al's 'transparency action cycle' and the further development of its key messages (Kosack and Fung 2014) reveal how very carefully such initiatives need to be designed and implemented to give them a reasonable chance of success. In particular, the relationship between information, citizen action and state response is not linear and simple: its complexity and multidimensionality need to become embedded into the thinking of Making All Voices Count programme staff and stakeholders. A core task of the REL component is to communicate these evidence-based lessons to colleagues within and beyond Making All Voices Count who are developing tech innovations for citizen voice and government responsiveness, and engage them in debates and learning arising.

Owing to the predominantly 'functional' aspirations of most innovation and scaling initiatives Making All Voices Count supports, most of our Practitioner Research Grants (see Section six) are concentrated on 'functional' initiatives, mainly relating to service delivery feedback loops. To ensure balance across the breadth of the field, the REL component can use other elements and funding instruments to deepen knowledge and evidence on approaches to enhancing accountability that operate at the more 'transformative' levels of governance and citizen engagement, both tech-enabled and not.

WHAT THE REL COMPONENT SHOULD FOCUS ON

It cannot be emphasised enough that a good understanding of the micro-contextual dynamics of accountability and responsiveness is essential. This is perhaps the most enduring and hard-learned lesson of the earlier generation of pre-tech accountability work. It is all the more so in a programme supporting research and innovation and scaling projects, which aims to promote technological innovation as a promising new avenue, and which aims to make **all** voices count, not only those which in the normal dynamics of the micro-context would stay silent, or get silenced, excluded or co-opted. High priority needs to be given, by Making All Voices Count staff, funded research partners and other stakeholders, to understanding the local dynamics of the contexts in which Making All Voices Count-supported interventions are undertaken. The REL component has a critical role to play in bringing forth lessons from earlier generations of accountable governance research and practice to reinforce the message that context is key, and in drawing other Making All Voices Count actors' attention to relevant evidence inside and outside the programme.

There is a need for deeper understanding of what a 'vertically-integrated' (Fox 2014) approach to accountability looks like: what are the levers and factors, right up and down the 'vertical slice' of governance relations, government and society, that make government respond to citizen voice? How can citizens and their social and technological intermediaries best organise themselves to elicit responsiveness and accountability from government?

The biggest leaps of faith within Making All Voices Count's ToC are those that relate to the actual power – as distinct from the apparent promise – of technological innovation to help get citizens' voices heard and responded to in accountable ways, given all the complex micro-contextual dynamics and 'vertical integration' challenges referred to above. Delivering on the programme's intention to 'scale up' and 'scale out' innovations that appear to have fulfilled their promise, requires critical and independent appraisal of the extent to which innovations have 'proven their concept'. It calls for prospective and retrospective research into what happens when they are scaled upwards or outwards. These tech-related questions all need to be explored and answered within a conceptually and empirically well-informed appreciation of the social and political terrain of governance relationships, which have country-specific and even location-specific characteristics. Hence the importance of Making All Voices Count constructing, and keeping updated, a set of country plans that captures our understanding of the programme's operating context for both tech innovation and research work in our six priority countries. The REL component is currently working with in-country researchers to produce short, succinct 'country-level research plans' for appending to the programme's country plans.

RESEARCH THEMES AND QUESTIONS

On the basis of the explanation of Making All Voices Count's ToC and the rapid tour of the current literature on citizen engagement and accountable governance, the programme's R&E strategy will give priority to the following research themes and questions in its research and evidence activities (please see Box 2 on following page).

BOX 2

PRIORITY RESEARCH THEMES AND QUESTIONS

Learning from the first generation of transparency and accountability, citizen voice and government responsiveness initiatives

- Conceptual work to flesh out the theoretical and conceptual basis for understanding citizen-led accountability and accountable, responsive governance (whether tech-enabled or not) and shaping it in practice, to enhance effectiveness and impact.

Government responsiveness

- What makes government actors targeted by Tech4TAIs change their behaviour and act responsively?
 - Have Tech4TAIs contributed to these changes?
 - What do we know about the effects of different kinds of technological innovation? What do we need to know? How can we know it?
- What makes a champion? In specific cases where government actors have become more responsive and accountable through enhanced citizen voice and appropriate technological solutions, and have become T&A ‘champions’:
 - Which have been the critical ingredients (non-technological determinants as well as technological) of these transformations?
 - How are the transformations sustained?
 - How transferable are they to other contexts?
- What kinds of citizen engagement lead to what kind of government responsiveness?
 - Are there relationships between different forms of citizen engagement and different responses or degrees of responsiveness from Government actors and institutions?

Exclusion and inclusion

- Who are ‘hard-to-reach’ potential users or currently non-users of Tech4TAIs?
- What successful experiences exist of reaching them in ways that have contributed to transformative change in their situations?
- Which social differences or exclusions are narrowed by technology, which are exacerbated, and which are unaffected?

Citizen engagement in a time of technology

- Synthesising what is known so far from the ‘first generation’ of TAIs that is relevant to tech-enabled transparency, accountability, voice and responsiveness work.
- Examining what happens to citizen engagement and voice when it is aggregated, mediated or represented through technological innovations, questioning assumptions and exploring risks.

Scaling up, scaling down or scaling out

- What is known about scaling as a transformative strategy and how does it apply in this field?
- On what basis should decisions be taken to support the scaling of a tech innovation in the field of citizen voice and government responsiveness, and how should the most appropriate form and level of scaling be designed?

4 THE MEANINGS AND ROLES OF RESEARCH, EVIDENCE AND LEARNING IN MAKING ALL VOICES COUNT

The early sections of this document (Sections 1–3) have set out step by step what we believe is the most relevant and useful contribution the REL component of Making All Voices Count can make. The rest of the document (Sections 4–5) outlines how we will deliver it. In this section, we define research and evidence and explain how we understand their role in the changes the programme seeks. This includes setting out their purposes and the range of actors we expect the REL component to engage with in various roles. We then show what the meanings, forms and roles of research, evidence and learning are at each level of the programme.

It is worth prefacing our definitions with these two observations about ‘evidence’ in the world of development and aid:

‘What constitutes evidence is often not clear-cut. Different forms of ‘evidence’ from practitioners, beneficiaries, partners and policymakers themselves, vie with each other in real-world settings. When policy priorities and evidence collide, it is not always evidence that comes out ahead’.

Stern et al 2012

‘In international development circles, ‘evidence’ has acquired a particular meaning relating to ‘what works’ – a narrow discourse in which the ‘how’ of context and process is ignored. It may often be the case that evidence is generated to validate certain policy narratives rather than as a foundation for planning interventions and building such narratives’.

Valters 2014

The field of practice in which Making All Voices Count operates contains a lot of ideals and assumptions. Some of these are common to other governance programmes and some are more unique. Some of the assumptions, ideals and propositions have been fairly well proven to hold up in practice, but often in quite specific contexts, and sometimes we do not know exactly what it was that caused them to ‘work’. Others have been tried and tested not very much, or not at all.

To achieve the desired impact of Making All Voices Count, our actions and programming have to be built on knowledge from research and on evidence and learning from past experience. But there are several aspects of the programme’s ToC – many of them shared with other governance and tech programmes’ ToCs – on which research and evidence are currently lacking. These relate primarily to quality or quantity of evidence, comparability, generalisability, and understandings of causation.

The REL component exists not only to supply the research and evidence needs of the programme. Making All Voices Count is among the latest in a long succession of efforts to enhance citizen voice and/or improve government accountability and responsiveness, using a set of approaches that have evolved over twenty years. As far as we can know, their impact has been limited though not negligible (see, for example, McGee and Gaventa 2012). But the various communities of voice, accountability and transparency actors – including practitioners, social activists, scholars, donors, funders, governments, implementing agencies and media – don't have enough good ways of knowing this reliably, nor of understanding exactly how observed impacts came about. This field as a whole has a need for more and better-quality research conducted, and evidence generated, on citizen engagement and government responsiveness.

In particular, the use of tech innovations in this field is a relatively recent development on which even less good-quality, reliable evidence is available. While considerable investment is going into these new developments, conclusive evidence about the benefits of using technology in pursuit of citizen engagement and accountable and responsive government is limited in quantity and often not very critical in nature.

It is not only the production of research and evidence that is needed. Some of the evidence that is available and research that has been conducted, is not reaching those who need it in forms in which they can easily use it. Or, despite reaching them, it is not getting used. In these cases, research is ahead of practice, and the programme has a role in turning that evidence into action. In other respects, research is behind practice: much research output follows an agenda driven more by academic debates and the needs of northern funding agencies, than by the needs of practitioners who work on voice, accountability and responsiveness.

DEFINITIONS, RESEARCH THEMES AND PURPOSES OF THE REL COMPONENT

Given the above considerations and the Making All Voices Count programme's aims, stakeholders and ToC:

- We take 'research' to mean enquiry which leads to the construction and co-construction of both theory and applied knowledge.
- We understand 'theory' more broadly than academic theories, to mean systems of ideas that explain something, especially systems based on general principles independent of the thing to be explained.⁹
- We understand 'evidence' as data and information, qualitative or quantitative, that are used for informing practice and building policy and academic narratives, for use in informing development and governance practice and aid, evaluation and development policy, as well as for building theory.¹⁰ All data, including data generated from own experience or perceptions, is potentially evidence of a kind. Its use as generalisable evidence may be limited because it may be highly case-specific, but experiential evidence can still be useful as a basis for one's own and others' reflection and learning, and subjective 'perception data' can be the best form of evidence, depending on which question is being answered. On the other hand, care is needed not to define 'evidence' too broadly. Information, data or knowledge needs to pass through a process of critical analysis, reflection and filtering, before it can count as evidence.

⁹ From Oxford Online Dictionary, <http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/theory>

¹⁰ This understanding is informed by Stern et al (2012).

- We take ‘action research’ to mean a participatory process oriented to develop practical knowledge, bringing together action and reflection, theory and practice in the pursuit of practical solutions to issues of pressing concern to people.¹¹

The REL component of Making All Voices Count has two main purposes:

- To contribute to improving performance and practice in the field of citizen voice, transparency and accountability, government responsiveness and accountability, and Tech4T&A. We can call this ‘programme learning’.
- To build an evidence-base and theory in the fields of voice and accountability, and specifically in the emerging fields of Tech4T&A and Open Government. We can call this ‘evidence- and theory-building’.

In respect of both purposes, we aim to get evidence into practice and practice into evidence, both within Making All Voices Count and beyond.

As the consortium partner leading Making All Voices Count’s R&E work, the role of IDS is twofold:

- To *manage* research and the generation of evidence: develop a principled, relevant and high-quality R&E strategy, manage a portfolio of research grants and projects, develop and nurture research partnerships in countries of Making All Voices Count operation; support the R&E-funded research partners to gain best results and value for money from these research grants and investments; strategise for and support the communication of R&E findings; and network in the development and aid research community to encourage studies by others on initiatives supported by Making All Voices Count.
- To *conduct* research and generate evidence: conduct research ourselves into burning or topical questions in the field, deploying a range of approaches and working within partnerships as appropriate, and exploit opportunities, with partners where appropriate, for global analysis and synthesis of research findings from the IDS and managed portfolios.

The Making All Voices Count R&E component has three major stakeholder groups:

- Practitioners of Tech4T&A/T&A – both development practitioners working on citizen engagement and social accountability, and tech innovators working on applications of technology for T&A-related purposes
- Scholars of Tech4T&A/T&A – academics, policy researchers, impact assessors and evaluators involved in exploring what T&A consist of and how they are achieved, and in producing scholarly outputs and policy guidance and recommendations in this field. These are currently mainly Northern-based but a programme such as Making All Voices Count is well-positioned to help nurture these actors and communities in southern countries.
- Funders of Tech4T&A/T&A programmes and implementing agencies – official donors, INGOs, philanthropic foundations and private funders contributing funds to programming in this field, interested in knowing about impact and understanding what works so as to shape their future strategies and investments.

¹¹ This definition draws heavily on Reason P. & H. Bradbury, *Inquiry and Participation in Search of a World Worthy of Human Aspiration*. In P. Reason & H. Bradbury (Eds.), *Handbook of Action Research: Participative Inquiry and Practice*. London: Sage Publications.

More broadly, practitioners and knowledge brokers involved in the fields of T&A, Information and Communication Technologies for Development (ICT4D), Tech4T&A, media, cultural and communications studies are potential interlocutors for Making All Voices Count's R&E component and likely audiences for R&E outputs.

The component supports both secondary and primary research. In terms of methodological approaches, the component's guiding principle is that of methodological appropriateness in respect of the research question(s) addressed in any given case. Decisions and practice as to methodological design will be informed by contemporary debates and scholarship as to appropriateness.

MAKING ALL VOICES COUNT'S RESEARCH, EVIDENCE AND LEARNING PATHWAYS

The programme's approach to implementation has evolved rapidly over the first year or so of the programme. During this time, we have been gradually mapping out the shape of the programme and the forms, meanings and roles of research, evidence and learning at each level of it.

We have reached what might be considered an emerging model of the pathways of research, evidence and learning model. It shows how these activities map onto the programme's different levels of operations, and what the REL component will do to generate, bring in and spin off in terms of research, evidence or learning at each level. A graphic representation of it is provided here (see page 30), with a textual explanation below. The Evaluation Management Unit (EMU) mentioned is the external evaluation unit assigned the task of independently monitoring and evaluating the programme's processes and delivery over its lifespan, a task it is approaching through selected 'impact case studies', surveys, quarterly assessments and reports, annual reviews, a mid-term review, and a comprehensive final evaluation. The text following the graphic includes explanations of other terms in the graphic that have not yet been discussed in this document.

Three levels of programme activity are shown here:

- the micro-level of specific projects and initiatives we support;
- the 'country plus' level, where a series of brokering, granting, engagement and influencing activities are carried out in the programme's six priority countries. These come against the backdrop of a country plan that includes context analysis and identification of the most important aspects of Making All Voices Count's ToC in that context; and a 'Global Innovation Competition' and other competitive activities with broader geographic reach;
- the level of the whole programme, not strictly a 'global' level in the geographic sense, but the full scale of Making All Voices Count's activities and aspirations.

At each level, Making All Voices Count actors and stakeholders engage in cycles of 'plan → experience → reflect → learn →¹²', with the REL component (which takes the lead in coordinating programme monitoring, evaluation and learning) helping to prompt and facilitate this process in a range of ways:

At the level of projects and initiatives:

- The REL component supports research and evidence-building in the form of 'practitioner research grants'. These are made to governance practitioners and tech

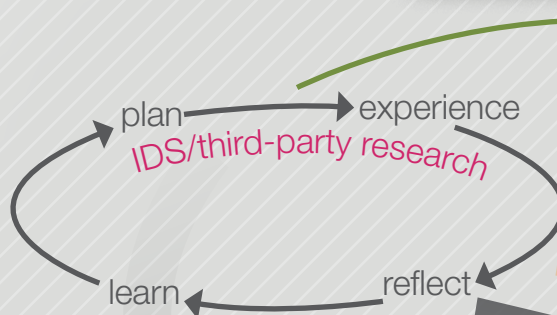
MAKING ALL VOICES COUNT RESEARCH, EVIDENCE AND LEARNING PATHWAYS

CONTRIBUTION TO IMPACT

Transformed governance arena: All people, including poor and marginalised, are able to engage public and private institutions and call them to account over their rights and issues that matter most to them.

MAVC PROGRAMME

- Knowledge and evidence from IDS and third-party research, and MAVC learning processes
- Knowledge and evidence from beyond MAVC fed in through REL outputs and events



LEARNING

- For periodic refreshing of programme ToC

- Annual reviews by EMU for DfID
- Mid-term review
- Final evaluation

COUNTRY PLANS+

Kenya, Tanzania, Ghana, South Africa, Indonesia, Philippines

- Knowledge and evidence from IDS and third-party research, and MAVC learning processes
- R&E from beyond MAVC fed in through REL outputs and events



LEARNING

- For adaptive management of country programme
- About country contexts and MAVC's possible contribution to changing aspects of context

- EMU case studies
- EMU quarterly reports

PROJECTS & INITIATIVES

- Practitioners' own experience and exposure
- Research mentors' experience and exposure
- Other knowledge and evidence from beyond MAVC, brought in through REL outputs and events



LEARNING

- To share across grantees
- To improve innovation, scaling and adaptation
- To improve MAVC strategies and ways of working

- M&E data
- EMU Case Studies

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KEY

- Learning arising at each level
- Research funded and supported by MAVC
- Data and evidence from MAVC shared with Evaluation Management Unit (EMU)
- Research, knowledge, evidence and learning fed in at each level, of use to MAVC stakeholders

innovators, some of whom are recipients of Making All Voices Count innovation and scaling grants. Grant funds are complemented with customised ‘research mentoring’ by experienced applied researchers. These grants usually fund action research projects bolted onto governance or tech innovation projects, in which the practitioners/innovators engage in self-critical reflective enquiry into their own practice and context.

- The component feeds in evidence and lessons from other, non-Making All Voices Count, contexts, via research mentors, via the programme’s research outputs and events, and by promoting the use of the practitioners’ own experience as the basis for reflective experiential learning within the initiative.
- The component distils learning arising from the project, processes it and shares it with Making All Voices Count-funded research partners, other Making All Voices Count stakeholders and actors involved in innovation, scaling and adaptation in the broader field of citizen voice and government responsiveness.
- To feed ongoing evaluation of the programme, the REL component gathers, collates and channels data and evidence from individual initiatives to the external EMU.

At the level of country plans:

- The REL component supports research and evidence-building in the form of ‘third-party research grants’ (awarded to third parties – see Section 5) and ‘IDS research projects’ (conducted by researchers at IDS – see Section 5). These focus on the research questions and themes set out in Section three, often exploring particular aspects of the Making All Voices Count ToC that resonate with these issues in the respective country context. The research is done by experienced and usually well-qualified researchers, and can be supported by specialist mentors identified by the REL component, as needed.
- Evidence and lessons from other Making All Voices Count initiatives and country activities, as well as from non-Making All Voices Count contexts, are fed into the programme’s country-level activities and dynamics via the research projects’ research uptake activities. Research uptake plans are essential elements of every research project funded, that get agreed with the REL component early in each grant period. Research communication support is provided by the component to strengthen the reach and influence of these research uptake activities.
- The component distils learning arising from the programme’s work in each country, processes it and shares it with Making All Voices Count-funded research partners, other Making All Voices Count stakeholders and actors involved in innovation, scaling and adaptation in the broader field of citizen voice and government responsiveness. This is likely to be lessons about the country contexts and about Making All Voices Count’s possible contributions to changing the most salient aspects of these, all processed so as to nourish the adaptive management of the country programme over time to maximise effectiveness and relevance.
- To feed ongoing evaluation of the programme, the REL component gathers, collates and channels data and evidence from the country-level portfolio of activities to the external EMU.

At the level of the programme ToC:

- Here too, the REL component supports research and evidence-building in the form of ‘third-party research grants’ (awarded to third parties – see Section 5) and ‘IDS research projects’ (conducted by researchers at IDS – see Section 5). Expert interdisciplinary social researchers focus on the research questions and themes

¹² A simplified adaptation of Kolb’s experiential learning cycle (see Kolb, D. A. 1984, *Experiential Learning: experience as the source of learning and development*. New Jersey: Prentice-Hall

set out in Section three, in some cases addressing them in the abstract or at a global level rather than single country level and in others focusing on one or more of Making All Voices Count's priority countries.

- Their outputs and research uptake inform periodic 'refreshing' of the programme's ToC, as well as contributing in quantity and quality to the broader evidence-base. These in turn influence scholars, donors, funders, activists and change agents in society and government.
- The REL component feeds data and evidence from this programme level into the annual and periodic reviews conducted by the EMU.

Evidence helps Making All Voices Count to contribute to transforming the governance arena into one in which all actors, including the poor and marginalised, are able to engage public and private institutions and call them to account over their rights and the issues that matter most to them. Through the various pathways outlined above, it is generated and circulated, at all three layers of the programme.

Research for 'programme learning' is close to monitoring and evaluation. There is scope for considerable synergy between the roles of the REL Component and the EMU. The two interact closely to avoid duplication and maximise complementarity. A useful (if crude) rule of thumb for distinguishing them is that the REL component's focus is an internal role in supporting REL for *learning* (both programme learning and theory-building for the wider academic and aid communities and communities of practice), while the EMU plays an external role primarily concerned with accountability (principally to funders). These different emphases notwithstanding, the two overlap in terms of expertise, activities and work methods. They each need to help shape the other's work and take up and use each other's outputs. In managing the monitoring and evaluation (M&E) aspects of the REL component, IDS relates closely to the external Evaluation Manager and, internally, to the Making All Voices Count Management Team and programme staff.

5 PUTTING THE R&E STRATEGY INTO ACTION

The previous section established what Making All Voices Count means by research, evidence and learning and how it will perform its functions relating to them. Section five outlines the resources at the programme's disposal for doing so.

In order to operationalise our strategic thinking in the Research, Evidence and Learning component we identified the following key activity areas: grant-making; brokering activities; capacity development; mentoring; research uptake and communication; and monitoring, evaluation and learning.

RESEARCH GRANTS

Making All Voices Count research grants can make a considerable and unique contribution to the field. They will contribute to deeper understandings and a more extensive evidence base as to which interventions work, how, why, and when.

In Year one a significant proportion of Making All Voices Count's REL funds (along with the 'Innovation' and 'Scaling' funds) were disbursed through an Open Call. It was subsequently decided that, to avoid excessive dispersion and to create the conditions for a programme of this scale and spread to have an impact, the programme should become more focused geographically. This meant that the programme ToC should be translated into country focuses and priorities; and the research that we fund should be aligned with the ToC and country focuses and with 'Innovation', 'Scaling' and 'Catalysing Global Action' activities in pursuit of these.¹³ This learning from Year one of Making All Voices Count led to the Country Programmes Approach, adopted throughout the programme, and will mean a more focused and brokered approach to future research fund disbursement.

From Year two onwards, the REL component will instead use three other research funding streams which have operated since the outset:

- 1 Third-party research grants** – research grants made to external organisations.
- 2 Practitioner research grants** – research grants focused on initiatives in practice, including Making All Voices Count-supported innovation and scaling projects. The research can be carried out by the project practitioner themselves or by a third-party researcher.
- 3 IDS research projects** – research carried out by researchers from IDS.

Below we explain each of these as well as spelling out which of the research questions are prioritised in which of the funding streams.

Third-party research grants

Within the scope of the research themes and questions and the country plan focuses mentioned above, resources will be awarded to third parties (ranging from highly

¹³ For further explanation, please see <http://www.makingallvoicescount.org/assets/Strategy-Synthesis.pdf>

qualified and experienced to fairly junior researchers). Once country research plans have been appended to the existing country plans, and in keeping with these some three to eight very specific research tenders will be designed and issued per year for third-party applicants. The resulting research projects, relatively small-scale, are destined to contribute to evidence- and theory-building by filling specific knowledge gaps at the country or broader level.

To ensure room for innovation and a degree of open-endedness and responsiveness, a portion of the funding awarded to third parties will be ring-fenced for themes not foreseen in the R&E strategy.

Third-party applicants and funded research partners tend to be from academic and applied research circles in Organisation for Economic Coordination (OECD) and to a lesser extent non-OECD (including Making All Voices Count) countries. Preferably, the applicant would be a partnership or consortium that includes research institutes, universities or Non Governmental Organisations (NGOs) with research capacity in any of Making All Voices Count’s six priority countries. Proposals for third-party grants are appraised by REL component staff together with the Research Outreach Team and the Making All Voices Count Investment Committee.¹⁴ Grant management and follow-through are provided by the REL component staff team as the projects unfold.

Disbursement plan for third-party research grants

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4
Target number of Grants	5 granted	6	6	3
Average size of grant	£75,000	1 x £155,000 2 x £30,000 3 x £20,000	1 x £155,000 2 x £30,000 3 x £20,000	3 x £91,600
Total Budget (approx.)	£375,000	£275,000	£275,000	£275,000

Practitioner research grants

These grants are designed to make a considerable and unique contribution to learning in the field. They fund research that will contribute to building an evidence-base and testing hypotheses, propositions and assumptions prevalent in the T&A field and/or present in the Making All Voices Count ToC. Most of these research initiatives will be integrated in Making All Voices Count-funded T&A/Tech4T&A projects supported by the programme’s Innovation or Scaling components, led by actors whose proposed initiatives relate to the REL agenda.

Previous thinking had been that the practitioner would carry out action research on their own Making All Voices Count project, but learning from our first year in the REL component showed the challenges of finding ‘Innovations and Scaling’ funded partners that had the capacity to implement this kind of research on their own project. Due to this learning and reflection, an adaptation has been made to allow for the research to be carried out by the Making All Voices Count funded partner where

¹⁴ See page 37 for further details of the Research Outreach Team. The Investment Committee is the decision-making organ of the Making All Voices Count Management Team for grant approval, and includes country programme staff, grant manager and REL staff.

capacity allows, or by a third-party researcher on the Making All Voices Count project. This means that the funds will be disbursed to institutions, individual researchers and research consortia through a mixture of competitive bids, commissioning, and the issuing of invitations to tender expressions of interest or concept notes.

With these research grants being smaller in scale than other REL grants, parameters for the research will be fairly tightly specified in respect of theme, research questions to be explored, and, where relevant, country or regional focus. The selection of Making All Voices Count practitioner research grants will be based on their relevance to priority research questions, the degree to which the respective programme-funded innovation and scaling project(s) reflects priorities established in Making All Voices Count Country Plans and ToC, and their likely importance and utility to development (T&A) practitioners and Tech4T&A practitioners.¹⁵

The REL Team and ROT members will work with the successful applicants to design and implement the research element of their Making All Voices Count-funded initiative (see *Capacity-building* below).

Disbursement plan for practitioner grants

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4
Target number of Grants	10	19	13	10
Average size of grant		£31,000	£23,000	£30,000
Total Budget (approx.)		£585,690	£300,000	£300,000

IDS research projects

A number of research projects will be conducted by IDS (sometimes with research partners in Making All Voices Count countries or elsewhere) each year. These will be secondary or primary in nature, retrospective or real-time in orientation, and synthetic or horizon-scanning in purpose. Their objective will be to continually test and flesh out the Making All Voices Count ToC (in coordination with the External Evaluation Manager).

In Year one the research aimed to take stock of the past in this field so as to inform the present and future. Thereafter, it serves to keep Making All Voices Count's research and implementation strategies abreast of relevant developments in practice, knowledge and evidence across the field.

IDS researchers will put forward short concept notes stating rationale, knowledge gaps to be filled, and proposed outputs. These will be appraised by the REL Team against criteria of relevance to practice, potential original contribution to the field, and value for money. On average £121,000 per year will be spent on IDS research, which will be disbursed as a maximum of six and minimum of four projects of varying scope.

¹⁵ Themes that we anticipate may arise include how to design initiatives that take account of current knowledge to maximise chances of the initiative's effectiveness and impact (e.g. how to embed it in local context and people's routines and realities; how to ensure uptake, etc.); and what a healthy innovation eco-system might look like (e.g. where do new ideas come from? Which conditions are conducive or essential for productive processes of co-creation and innovation in the Tech4T&A field?).

Disbursement Plan for IDS Research Grants

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4
Target number of Grants	4	5	5	6
Average size of grant	£30,250	£31,200	£35,700	£29,750
Total Budget (approx.)	£121,000	£156,000	£178,500	£178,500

BROKERING

During Year one of Making All Voices Count we aimed to lay proper foundations for the lifetime of the programme, by examining what evidence already exists and contributes to the T&A and Tech4T&A sectors. We achieved this by hosting an e-dialogue discussion in February 2014, which brought together different practitioners (development and tech), government, aid and academic circles, to present and discuss state-of-the-art knowledge about the extent to which T&A and Tech4T&A initiatives are, in fact, making all voices count.¹⁶ Looking at how they make all voices count, subject to which obstacles or enablers; and to identify what else these actors need to know and what Making All Voices Count should prioritise in research and evidence-building over the coming years.

This brokering event gave us a robust evidence-base on which to build our research, evidence and learning strategy on and to develop further brokering activities.

We will continue to build on this evidence mapping and brokering in the fields of T&A and Tech4T&A through ongoing collaborations with partners in the field. For example, in Year two we are holding a brokering event in collaboration with the Global Partnership for Social Accountability (GPSA) and the Transparency & Accountability Initiative (TAI), to bring together academics and practitioners in the field of Social Accountability, to share the R&E Strategy and to hear their insights on current and upcoming research themes and initiatives in the area.

ANNUAL LEARNING AND INSPIRATION EVENT

Our key brokering activity will be the annual Learning and Inspiration Event, which will be held each year in a Making All Voices Count country. Learning is envisioned at several levels during these events:

- Project level: learning from grantees and amongst grantees.
- Making All Voices Count programme level: learning for the programme, to inform future grant-making, brokering and research.
- Wider sector level: with the contributions to the event with experts from within the field, there will be learning shared from and to the wider sector.

Participants of the events will include Making All Voices Count-funded research partners, programme staff and actors from practitioner, government, aid and academic circles. At these events lessons learnt and knowledge generated and co-constructed during the previous year of Making All Voices Count activities will be shared and deliberated on and their implications for these communities of actors, and for the future direction of the programme’s four components, will be determined.

¹⁶ For further information please visit <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zAU3Tzjp-kY>. The four think pieces that emerged from the e-dialogue process can be accessed from <http://www.makingallvoicescount.org/knowledge-repository/>

Budget for brokering

Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4
£46,000	£104,000	£104,000	£104,000

CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT: MENTORING AND ACCOMPANIMENT

The main capacity building carried out under the REL component will be via the mentoring and accompaniment of funded research partners. More mentoring and accompaniment effort will be devoted to Making All Voices Count-funded practitioner research partners than to third-party and IDS researchers. The mentoring and accompaniment will be provided by IDS researchers and ROT members in Making All Voices Count countries, some virtually and some face-to-face during short visits. Thematically speaking, their research is likely to be oriented to improving practice, more than building theory; and the research approaches that are appropriate are likely to be action research and applied research with a strong learning focus. Given the scarcity of strong traditions of critical and reflective practice in the development aid sectors of the Making All Voices Count countries, we expect that a crucial input from the REL Team will be the nurturing of these traditions, which in the long run will raise the quality of the growing evidence-base.

Depending on timing and other fund management issues, it may prove possible to develop 'research cohorts' of Making All Voices Count-funded practitioner research partners who pass together through a 'learning trajectory' in purpose-designed learning cycles and consolidate and enrich their learning both throughout the process by learning from their own and each other's experience.

The cohorts would be supported by facilitated learning events, distance coaching, exchanges and use of online learning and knowledge sharing platforms, all derived from IDS's innovations in teaching and capacity building. If it proves feasible, the cohort modality will enhance efficiency of the REL component's capacity-building inputs.

CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT: RESEARCH OUTREACH TEAM (ROT)

IDS has established a Making All Voices Count Research Outreach Team (ROT) to increase our reach within Making All Voices Count target countries and regions, to customise our brokering role to local realities, and to mentor our REL grantees. Chaired by IDS with Hivos and Ushahidi representation, the ROT includes one individual operating independently or as a member of a regional partner organisation/institute, in each Making All Voices Count region (South Asia, Southeast Asia, East Africa, West and Southern Africa). They work directly with the REL Team to provide country/region contextual research and evidence, work directly with funded partners to provide mentoring, and participate in ROT or REL events such as the Annual Learning and Inspiration Event.

Budget for capacity development

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4
ROT	£46,000	£43,000	£45,000	£41,000
Mentoring	0	£65,600	£75,200	£75,200
Other learning activities	0	£41,000	£41,000	£41,000

RESEARCH UPTAKE AND COMMUNICATION

To promote the use and application of the evidence generated through this programme we need to ensure that relevant evidence is available; that it is accessible to the people who need it; and that people and organisations have the capacities and behaviours that will result in them engaging with and using the evidence.

Given the nature of the Making All Voices Count programme, research uptake and communication activities will embody principles of openness wherever possible or appropriate. This could include ensuring research publications are available as Open Access, releasing datasets as Open Data, and ensuring processes are open and transparent.

Making All Voices Count's Communications Team, based in The Hague, leads on the consortium's communication with all programme stakeholders. The REL Team at IDS has specialist in-house expertise on research uptake and research communication, essential in a programme which gives such a central place to changing practices and behaviours through research. The REL component's scope of work therefore includes a range of research uptake and communication activities, which include:

- Identifying, understanding and engaging the relevant stakeholders: including those involved in T&A sector support in Making All Voices Count countries and national and international stakeholders involved in designing and implementing T&A programmes, policies and strategies. This will underpin dissemination and uptake activities that respond to their specific needs and preferences.
- Audience research: stakeholders will be researched, to understand their attitudes and behaviours in relation to T&A and decision-making and the opportunities and barriers to evidence use in decision-making and practice.
- Review of the knowledge landscape: the knowledge networks and systems that currently exist will be examined, to assess how effective they are in supporting evidence-informed decision-making for T&A and citizen engagement in the Making All Voices Count countries. This review will need to be designed with a streamlined and pragmatic approach to its scope, but will constitute an exciting way to bridge across all four components, addressing the communications and uptake 'needs' arising in all of them.
- Support to funded research partners to design and implement effective research uptake and communication.

The findings from these processes will inform the development of a research dissemination and uptake strategy targeted to the different stakeholder groups.

Budget for Research uptake and communications

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4
Research communications activities	£27,738.39	£49,000.00	£52,200.00	£52,200.00

MONITORING, EVALUATION AND LEARNING

Making All Voices Count is an innovative, potentially political programme operating in complex settings. It therefore needs to be flexible and responsive to changes in these settings, and learn from the success or failure of its brokering, engagement, grants for innovation, and experiments in scaling up. As such, Making All Voices Count takes an adaptive approach to planning, monitoring, evaluation and learning, encapsulated in its ToC. To be a fully accountable programme, Making All Voices Count needs to do much more than report against pre-established indicator targets; it needs a monitoring,

evaluation and learning (MEL) system that also enables learning and adaptation at all levels.

A Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning system is therefore being established, that aims to enhance the programme's ability to be accountable to its different stakeholders, and to learn from the successes and weaknesses of its own work and the work of others. The MEL system is located within the Research, Evidence and Learning component because its aims and ways of working are closely connected with those of this component. While research and evidence activities and outputs are among the things to be monitored and evaluated, at the same time they constitute ways we monitor the field, Making All Voices Count's evolving positioning in the field, and the dynamic contexts in which the programme operates. A core purpose of the internal MEL system is to generate project-level data from all the kinds of projects and activities the programme funds (research, innovation and scaling) that – together with context data – can be used to reflect on whether Making All Voices Count is triggering the changes it expects.

An external Evaluation Management Unit has been set up for the duration of the programme, tasked with independently evaluating all the programme's components from both a 'process' and 'impact' perspective. It has designed an approach based on 'realist' evaluation theory to explore whether and why different aspects of MAVC are having or not having their intended impacts.

A MEL Manager based at IDS works in close integration with the country-level programme staff and programme managers to:

- supply the accountability and learning needs of the programme's donors, through the consortium's and the external EMU's periodic reporting
- collate and make sense of monitoring and evaluation data gathered continuously from across the full span of the programme, turning it into meaningful sources of learning
- coordinate and drive the circulation of learning, from monitoring and evaluation data, back into future programme activities via processes of critical reflection and adaptation.

THE REL TEAM

Putting the R&E strategy into action can only happen with the correct level of resources, skills and experience in its team. Human resources have increased on the REL component from its inception, growing from two part-time staff to a full team. In Year two of Making All Voices Count, the REL Team saw significant investment, and as of April 2015 will consist of:

- Research, Evidence & Learning (REL) Coordinator, 50 per cent Full Time Equivalent (FTE)
- REL Programme Manager, 100 per cent FTE
- Monitoring, Evaluation & Learning Manager, 100 per cent FTE
- REL Programme Officer, 80 per cent FTE
- REL Research Officer, 100 per cent FTE
- REL Research Communications Officer, 50 per cent FTE

All members of the team work across the Making All Voices Count consortium and have links with key colleagues in other programme components, allowing for cross-consortium working and strategic thinking at programme level. Members of the REL Team participate in the Making All Voices Count Management Team, Steering Committee, Country Teams and the Annual Strategy Meeting.

6 THE WAY FORWARD FOR THE *REL* COMPONENT: PLAN → EXPERIENCE → REFLECT → LEARN

An innovative programme which combines an unusual set of strengths and activities to achieve a challenging set of outcomes in a complex field needs to approach the task with humility and a will to reflect and learn. This document has presented Making All Voices Count's R&E strategy as it stands after 23 months of operation. This period has included intensive inception activities, rapid piloting and revisiting of the programme's original theory of action, and significant changes in the programme's delivery model and structure.

Among these changes, the REL component has been staffed up to the level we consider necessary to deliver on our commitments. As the programme moves forward through its third and fourth years, we will reflect with our Making All Voices Count consortium colleagues on how all the various dimensions of the R&E strategy unfold and refresh the strategy periodically, as needed. We will be seeking to learn from the component's experience and fold the learning into future research, evidence and learning activities, both in this programme, and in the broader field of citizen voice and government responsiveness and accountability.

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ANNEX I MAKING ALL VOICES COUNT THEORY OF CHANGE (OCTOBER 2014)

PROGRAMME COMPONENTS AND STRATEGIES

Challenges arise between citizens and governments about accountability and responsiveness.

Important new opportunities are emerging to use mobile and internet technologies as new ways to enable citizens to work together, and with government. Mobile and internet have potential to add value to wider work to improve transparency and accountability.

MAVC Theory of Action

- Innovation and scaling
- Global Innovation Competition
- Research, evidence and learning
- Catalysing global action

Link: MAVC's contribution

- A systemic approach, ranging from functional through instrumental to transformative.
- Effective matching of transparency and accountability solutions with technological innovations, and support for the capacity of both citizens and governments to take them up.
- Mobilisation of citizens and governments in a locally-embedded, inclusive way that provides new opportunities for relating, cooperating and mutual trust.
- Building and extending multiple networks of learning, mentoring and brokering of innovations amongst MAVC stakeholders: funded partners, policymakers, opinion-formers, donors and philanthropic investors in parallel fields.

Assumption

Implementing partners effectively identify gaps and opportunities, and receive sufficient high-quality proposals with genuine potential to activate the nexus of citizen action space, access to technology and innovators, and access to government.

OUTPUTS

Reach

Conditions more conducive to social and collaborative innovation; increased access to innovation for citizens and government agencies, to trigger new functional, instrumental and transformative governance interactions

Assumptions

- Absorptive capacity of organisations able and willing to implement projects in this field.
- Capacities of citizens, citizens' groups and government actors to engage in transparency and accountability initiatives (skills, motivations, power, security, relationships, technologies) need to be supported through MAVC strategies or alliances.
- Coalition-building of CSOs, tech hubs and local government actors is needed as most innovation will come from applied approaches and a combination of tech and civil action.

Influence

Evidence and learning generated through MAVC is taken up by grantees, donors, government agencies and CSOs.

Assumptions

- Research and evidence is made available in ways that can inform programme decisions.
- Learning from the first generation of MAVC-supported processes will inform subsequent generations.
- If relevant to local citizens' interests, provision of policy information can increase government responsiveness. If other conditions are present, more informed citizens are more likely to participate in political life, thereby enhancing prospects for accountability.

Catalysing action

Increased global network of funders, experts and mobilisers supporting MAVC objectives

Assumption

Growing interest amongst larger number of donors/funders. Growing evidence base with which to influence funding decisions.

ENGAGEMENT AND INTERACTION PRODUCE OUTCOMES

Link:

MAVC activities facilitate engagement and interactions between citizens and their organisations; transparency, accountability, technology and government actors; and investors, to cumulatively build up multiple coalitions and networks to stimulate demand for MAVC-style transparency and accountability innovations.

Assumptions

- Effective brokering between those with the innovative ideas, and those with a need to use mobile- and online-enabled tools. Tools and applications are developed that are closely related to the context in which they are used.
- The potential benefits of engaging in transparency and accountability processes outweigh the risks for citizens (as rights-holders) and government officers (as duty-bearers) to act.
- Transparency and accountability processes offer realistic models for improved citizen-government dialogue and relations to support their adoption in different contexts.
- Media actors, opinion-formers, intermediaries, policy influencers and knowledge brokers take up MAVC-type innovations for their stakeholder groups at local, state and national level.

INTERMEDIATE OUTCOMES

Citizen change agents mobilise and engage with governments

Citizens' groups and intermediaries interested in taking civil action engage in transparency and accountability initiatives with government actors and each other.

Government change agents mobilise and engage with citizens

Government and civil service actors interested in reform engage in transparency and accountability opportunities with citizens and their groups.

Innovators and investors respond

Innovators integrate a 'citizen good' perspective into their applications, and public and private actors invest in MAVC-style innovations to stimulate an enabling innovation system.

Engagement

Citizens, intermediaries and government actors make regular use of innovative transparency and accountability solutions to support constructive interactions between government and citizens.

PROGRAMME OUTCOME AND IMPACT

Impact: Transformed governance arena

All people, including those who are poor and marginalised, are able to engage public and private institutions and call to them to account about rights and other issues that matter most to citizens.

Link: MAVC outcome

Improved relationships and increased opportunities for at least constructive dialogue and at best co-governance between citizens and government in countries with an MAVC country plan.

Assumptions

- Citizens as rights holders are willing and able to exercise their agency and government officers are willing and able to respond effectively.
- Governments (continue to) perceive that it is in their interest to be held to account by, and be responsive to, citizens and their intermediaries
- Citizens and their intermediaries (continue to) find it worth their while and safe to engage with governments.

Assumptions

Participation is sustained:

- citizens feel they are being treated fairly and getting government response in order to avoid the negative consequences of fear or apathy.
- government actors recognise that it is in their political interests to give effective responses.

LEARNING ABOUT OUTCOMES STIMULATES AND SHAPES ENGAGEMENT AND INTERACTIONS

STARTING POINT

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ABOUT MAKING ALL VOICES COUNT

Making All Voices Count is a programme working towards a world in which open, effective and participatory governance is the norm and not the exception. This Grand Challenge focuses global attention on creative and cutting-edge solutions to transform the relationship between citizens and their governments. We encourage locally driven and context specific change, as we believe a global vision can only be achieved if it is pursued from the bottom up, rather than the top down.

The field of technology for Open Government is relatively young and the consortium partners, Hivos, Institute of Development Studies (IDS) and Ushahidi, are a part of this rapidly developing domain. These institutions have extensive and complementary skills and experience in the field of citizen engagement, government accountability, private sector entrepreneurs, (technical) innovation and research.

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RESEARCH, EVIDENCE AND LEARNING COMPONENT

The Research, Evidence and Learning component's purpose is to contribute to improving performance and practice and build an evidence base in the field of citizen voice, government responsiveness, transparency and accountability (T&A) and Technology-for-T&A. It is managed by the Institute of Development Studies, UK, a leading global organisation for research, teaching and communication with over thirty years' experience of developing knowledge on governance and citizen participation.

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