MAKING ALL
VOICES COUNT

A GRAND CHALLENGE
FOR DEVELOPMENT

# Supporting innovation and the use of technologies in accountability initiatives: lessons from Making All Voices Count

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IDS Institute of
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**PROGRAMME LEARNING REPORT**

**Supporting innovation and the use of technologies in accountability initiatives: lessons from Making All Voices Count**

## Authors

At the time of writing, Duncan Edwards, Hannah Hudson, Colin Anderson, Rosie McGee and Karen Brock all worked for the research, evidence and learning component of Making All Voices Count, based at the Institute of Development Studies (IDS).

## Acknowledgements

## Reference and copyright

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# Summary

Making All Voices Count was an international initiative that harnessed the power of innovation and new technologies to support effective, accountable governance. Focusing on six countries in Africa and Asia, the programme was implemented by a consortium comprising Hivos (the lead agency), the Institute of Development Studies (IDS) and Ushahidi. During its four-and-a-half-year life cycle (2013–17), it used funding from the Department for International Development (DFID), the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida), the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and the Omidyar Network to make grants to support new ideas that amplified the voices of citizens, and enabled governments to listen and respond.

From the start, Making All Voices Count was also a learning programme. The objective of this learning was not only to bring about change during the programme's life cycle, but also to leave a legacy that would help to ensure that future governance programmes and initiatives seeking to capitalise on the transformative potential of innovation and technology are more informed, inclusive and impactful.

This programme learning report emerged from a wider process of analysing, discussing and synthesising the data from the programme, which wove together evidence-based learning about technology for accountable governance initiatives with experiential learning on how best to support such work. The report highlights five of the lessons that emerged from Making All Voices Count about how – and how not – to run large, complex programmes that intend to support innovation in governance.

The report opens by describing the context and design of Making All Voices Count, and describing how it evolved as it was implemented. It goes on to discuss the five lessons:

1. Take time at the start to get the basics right.

2. Trusting relationships at all levels are vital in successfully running a large, complex programme.

3. As they are inherently risky and uncertain, and require adaptive approaches to succeed, innovation programmes are not for all funders, or for all implementers.

4. What gets measured and monitored needs to be what matters for effectiveness and impact, complex as this may be.

5. Some types of knowledge and relationships needs to be viewed as valued outcomes to be pursued, rather than assumed to exist from the start.

# Contents

# About Making All Voices Count and this programme learning report

Making All Voices Count was an international initiative that harnessed the power of innovation and new technologies to support effective, accountable governance. Focusing on six countries in Africa and Asia,[1] the programme was implemented by a consortium comprising Hivos (the lead agency), the Institute of Development Studies (IDS) and Ushahidi. During its four-and-a-half-year life cycle (2013–17), it used funding from the Department for International Development (DFID), the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida), the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and the Omidyar Network to make grants to support new ideas that amplified the voices of citizens, and enabled governments to listen and respond.[2]

From the start, Making All Voices Count was also a learning programme. The objective of this learning was not only to bring about change during the programme's life cycle, but also to leave a legacy that would help to ensure that future governance programmes and initiatives seeking to capitalise on the transformative potential of innovation and technology are more informed, inclusive and impactful.

This emphasis on learning led to an exceptional core feature of Making All Voices Count: a substantial, embedded research, evidence and learning (REL) component that was an integral part of what was otherwise a mainly operational programme. The REL component led the process of building an evidence base on the roles that technologies play in securing responsive, accountable governance, and supporting practitioners to learn from this evidence. This process involved conducting research, and also issuing grants to both professional researchers and practitioners to

study and reflect on what works, what doesn't, and where, how and why.

The authors of this programme learning report were all members of the REL team, which was based at IDS. They wrote it in the very final days of the programme as part of a wider process of analysing, discussing and synthesising the data from the programme.[3] That process wove together evidence-based learning about technology (tech) for accountable governance with our own experiential learning on how best to support such work.

The key evidence-based findings from the programme – and a guide to the body of research publications it produced – are summarised in *Appropriating technology for accountability* (McGee with Edwards, Anderson, Hudson and Feruglio 2018). Written in parallel, this programme learning report highlights five of the lessons we learned about how – and how not – to run large, complex programmes that intend to support innovation in governance. As the introduction to *Appropriating technology for accountability* points out, "[w]e ourselves are actors in the programme, part of its theory of change". This learning report is, therefore, based on critical reflections on our own experiences as practitioners; it distils some of the many hundreds of conversations we have had with our colleagues, with Making All Voices Count grantees and with others working in this field. It draws on some of the challenges we encountered, and some of our successes.

These lessons are intended for others who fund or run such programmes, and we hope that they contribute to improving performance and practice in the field of citizen voice, tech for transparency and accountability, and government responsiveness.

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1   In order of prominence in the programme's grants portfolio, these are: South Africa, Kenya, Philippines, Indonesia, Ghana and Tanzania. Making All Voices Count operated in a further six countries at a lower intensity (in terms of grants and accompanying activities): Liberia, Uganda, Pakistan, Nigeria, Mozambique and Bangladesh.

2   Making All Voices Count funded 178 projects: 72 innovation projects, 61 research projects, 38 scaling projects and 7 existing tech hubs.

3   The principal sources that we draw on here are: a cycle of reflective learning by programme staff, based on self-assessment using a qualitative assessment scorecard (QAS) methodology (described in Box 2); three programme-wide learning events, held in 2014, 2016 and 2017; identification and development of stories of change and impact, based on the Most Significant Change approach; a reflective learning trajectory with six partners during 2016–17; a series of practice papers produced through critical dialogues between research grant managers and grantees; and exit interviews conducted with grantees.

# What did Making All Voices Count set out to do, and how did it evolve?

Making All Voices Count was established to reveal, foster and support innovations that sought to increase government accountability and responsiveness. In programme Steering Committee meetings, the implementing consortium was told by its funders and advisers to "go out, take risks, seek out and support 'unusual suspects'" and to "find innovations which would shift the relationships between citizens and their governments".[4]

In many cases, the programme's combination of funding, mentoring, research, brokering relationships and learning was successful. It fostered exciting innovations, and supported them to shape changes in governance through improved service delivery, greater accountability to citizens and reduced corruption. The projects described in Box 1 illustrate some of what Making All Voices Count achieved.

Some elements of Making All Voices Count worked better than others. Indeed, a brief look at how the programme unfolded reflects the importance of that old principle of development: context matters. Within its relatively short lifetime, the programme's political context underwent significant shifts and changes.

It was conceived at a time of optimism about the prospects for deepening and transforming democracy, and of confidence in the power of technology to effect changes in accountability. Launched to great fanfare at the United Nations General Assembly in September

## Box 1. Innovations that helped to shape changes in governance

In Liberia, TIMBY Productions created a user-friendly tech platform through which citizens and citizen journalists have become involved in monitoring the corporate use of land, timber and mineral resources, and generating data visualisations of this use and accompanying narratives. Among the outcomes were: enhanced citizen capacity to monitor the use of natural resources; detection and prevention of corrupt transactions; and concrete examples of communities and clans using TIMBY-generated information to negotiate more environmentally and community-friendly deals with private sector actors.

In Ghana, the Oil Journey project opened up data on community development projects funded by oil revenues. This raised citizens' awareness about the use, misuse and lack of accountability around these funds. The data were also used by the state Public Interest and Accountability Committee, which formed an effective coalition with the African Centre for Energy Policy to continue working for the accountable use of these funds.

In Pakistan's Punjab region, the Bahawalpur Service Delivery Unit took an innovative approach to digitalising the health records managed by women health workers delivering antenatal care, using geographic information systems (GIS) mapping to develop an online monitoring dashboard. The project improved and extended service delivery (antenatal registration and care) to 31% more women, increased delivery by skilled birth attendants by 26%, and increased deliveries at government health facilities by 11%.

In the Philippines, the Institute for War and Peace Reporting and the Citizen Action Network worked to enable data from ten local government units to be opened up, so that citizens could be involved in prioritising the allocation of public funds amid spending constraints. The project provided an SMS-based[5] online feedback mechanism for citizens to monitor local government performance anonymously, survey citizens' assessments of their local government units, and collate their feedback on how government could be more responsive.

In South Africa, Yowzit successfully piloted and adapted a platform for citizens to rank, review and provide substantive feedback on the performance of local governments and service providers. The platform has been taken up by government and integrated into Customer Care Centres in Ekurhuleni Metro (Gauteng East). A partnership has been built between public officials and partner civil society organisations (CSOs), enhancing both sides' capacity to engage with government regarding feedback – an important step in moving away from a historically antagonistic relationship to one based on constructive collaboration.

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4   Notes from Steering Committee meetings, 2013 and 2014.
5   Short message service, commonly known as text messages.

2013, it began amid a rush to pledge aid funds to support the implementation of the recently formed Open Government Partnership.[6]

This background of optimism and urgency led Making All Voices Count to issue an immediate Open Call (September–November 2013) and a two-stage Global Innovation Competition (November 2013–April 2014), inviting proposals from across the world to harness new technologies to 'fix the broken feedback loop between citizens and governments'.

However, many of the early proposals and projects were weak, affording little transformative potential. As an early programme learning report notes, "[i]n the first year . . . few [of the projects set in motion by the granting process] were grappling with the politics of accountability, and even fewer were looking to the kind of transformative processes and relationships that will be needed to create more opportunities to express citizen demands, and new ways to enable citizens to work together and with government" (Brock, McGee and Besuijen 2014: 21).

By the end of the programme's first year of operation, the implementing consortium and donors agreed that a more strategic and embedded approach was necessary to enable Making All Voices Count to support innovations that could play useful roles in specific accountability ecosystems in its six priority countries.

The new approach represented a substantial operational shift. It recognised that to surface high quality projects, support grantees effectively, and help them broker the relationships they needed to succeed, a 'traditional' innovation fund model was not going to work. Instead, the programme needed staff who understood and were embedded in the country contexts, and who could build the coalitions of diverse actors needed to support the combination of technology and civil action that would produce relevant innovations. In-country programme staff would also help to build the capacities of citizen groups and government actors to move towards transformative governance relationships, providing support through programme strategies and alliances (Brock *et al.* 2014).

Co-evolving with this new programme structure, the REL component adapted its learning model as the programme's implementation began to take shape. It responded to new learning from across the tech for transparency and accountability field, and ensured that this was reflected in the research projects the programme funded (McGee *et al.* 2015). It also

embellished its strategy to encourage critical curiosity and a cross-programme culture of learning, through the creation of a range of spaces and opportunities to learn at the international, programme, country and project levels (Brock, Shutt and Ashlin 2016).

It is also worth noting two significant shifts in the wider political context that took place while the programme unfolded (2013–17), which also shaped its evolution. Firstly, a number of trends and incidents contributed to a deflation of the hype and expectations concerning the emancipatory promise of technology: the Snowden revelations;[7] the use of technology to 'manufacture' political consent; the rise of right-wing populism; and alleged foreign influence in the US election in 2016 and the UK's Brexit referendum. These contributed to a shift in the broadly positive narrative that had characterised the start of the programme, as it became more widely recognised that technology's positive potential for deepening democracy is mirrored by its negative potential to control and oppress.[8]

Secondly, shifts in the domestic politics of some Making All Voices Count donor countries – and in particular, their narratives about aid – changed both the level of financial scrutiny that some donors demanded and the levels of risk they were prepared to accept.

## Lesson 1: Take time at the start to get the basics right

Making All Voices Count was complex and ambitious in both its design and its aspirations, bringing together diverse donors, implementers and grantees to address complicated political accountability problems. Amid its complexity and ambition, Making All Voices Count also faced pressure and impatience from donors and other actors in the transparency and accountability field to get funding out to civic tech initiatives across Africa and Asia. One result of this pressure was that the implementing consortium had just two months to set things up and establish its systems before launching the first Open Call for grants, described above, in 2013.

There are certain basics that implementing partners and donors need to get right for the successful delivery of any complex development programme, whatever its nature or thematic focus. Many of these are obvious to experienced development practitioners: they include experienced strategic leadership, timely and strategic decision making, and effective budgeting and financial management.

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6  An international platform that aims to support champions of open government who are working to make their governments more accountable and responsive. See: www.opengovpartnership.org

7  Edward Snowden leaked US government documents revealing the extensive collection and analysis of communications data by the US National Security Agency, spotlighting mass digital surveillance and eroding trust in government.

8  See, for example, Treré (2016).

In a complex programme with diverse stakeholders, time is needed to develop shared understandings of expectations and requirements between all donors and consortium members in relation to these basics. Equally, the consortium needs to develop a shared understanding of and mutual responsibility for the programme's theory of change and theory of action – especially how different constituent components should complement one another.

Making All Voices Count's short inception period demonstrated the truth of the old adage 'more haste, less speed', and cast a long, problematic shadow over the programme's life cycle.

## Lesson 2: Trusting relationships at all levels are vital in successfully running a large, complex programme

The relationship between the donor consortium and implementing consortium is key to successful implementation. If one party – or the other, or both – fails to get the basics right, trust can erode as expectations aren't met and decisions are delayed.

Delayed decision-making and unreliable funding flows can strain relationships between grantors and grantees. The strategic and embedded approach Making All Voices Count adopted in June 2014 (described on page 6), relied on programme staff building trusting relationships with a very wide and diverse range of grantees and other stakeholders in the accountability and tech ecosystems of their countries. What may seem like minor delays and insignificant missed deadlines at donor level can drastically erode trust, credibility and goodwill in these country-level relationships, on which successful programme delivery ultimately depends. Factors far beyond the control of front-line programme actors can do demoralising damage to their personal and professional reputations.

Getting the basics wrong is extremely costly, both financially and in terms of reputation and effectiveness.

## Lesson 3: As they are inherently risky and uncertain and require adaptive approaches to succeed, innovation programmes are not for all funders, nor all implementers

Innovation has become one of the buzzwords of international development, its association with technology taken for granted. But innovation is not the same thing as invention, and does not just mean new apps. In contrast with invention – the process of having an idea – innovation is the process by which society gains value from that idea (Fagerberg 2003). This is often a long, winding, learning journey, with multiple wrong turns and some doubling back along the way. Innovation can be 'stop-start', only demonstrating its value in the long term, once new elements have been added to the initial context.

Innovation is therefore inherently risky and uncertain. It will continue to happen the way that it happens, not in the way that 'aidland'[9] might want it to happen. Different donors need to reflect on their different appetites and capacities for bearing these risks. In a multi-donor scenario, reflections need to be shared, reality-checked and managed effectively.

Innovations funded by an aid programme cannot be guaranteed to achieve their intended outcomes in alignment with the programme's linear timelines, plans, logframes and budgets. And managing and supporting innovation is all about minimising risk which, in such an uncertain venture, is best done by learning and adapting.

Many of the governance problems Making All Voices Count's grantee innovators tackled were highly complex and political, with limits to what could be known in advance; in most projects, it was unclear whether the innovators recognised this at the outset.

Staff from 18 programme-funded projects formed part of a sample of 35 people interviewed for a study of tech for transparency and accountability projects in Kenya (Prieto Martin, Faith, Hernandez and Ramalingam 2017). Some 79% of interviewees said that adapting to context had meant a lot to their project, and the majority had altered their plans from the beginning of project implementation, if not earlier.

This is echoed across the programme. Very few Making All Voices Count-supported projects did exactly what they initially set out to do; most adapted to the changing dynamics of each context, and in response to lessons that emerged as the projects unfolded. If the purpose of programme monitoring was the maximisation of effectiveness and impact, then these were the aspects that needed to be monitored. But in this programme, as in many others funded by official aid donors, financial accountability imperatives drove the programme's monitoring system so strongly as to override learning objectives. Whether this would have happened if a more trusting donor–implementer relationship had prevailed can only be guessed at.

Some of the programme's donors set out wanting to 'let a thousand flowers bloom', favouring a model in which innovation projects were many and short: 6–24 months. Yet innovation – not to mention the

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*In a programme comprised of fundamentally different kinds of projects, outputs and outcomes, with a complex theory of change, uncritical slavery to an imperfect logframe can distort rather than illuminate.*

accountability-claiming that was one of the intended outcomes of the programme – is often a longer-term process, and project outcomes could scarcely be expected with time frames this short.

Many Making All Voices Count innovation and scaling projects did achieve governance outcomes – as highlighted in Box 1, and discussed more by McGee *et al.* 2018 – but often the 'innovation projects' themselves were only one episode in a much longer process of giving their invention social value. The only outcomes that can realistically be expected of these 'innovation project' episodes are *knowledge* outcomes: the harvesting of lessons from developing and testing the idea.

A good example of this is one of projects in Box 1. The South African social enterprise Yowzit initially received an innovation grant to modify its existing ratings and responsiveness site – an Internet and mobile platform that gives citizens and consumers the opportunity to give feedback to businesses and service providers – to cover more local government services. One *knowledge outcome* of the innovation process – a lesson learned from critical reflection on developing and testing this idea – was that "online action will not translate into offline action without the necessary structures in place, such as a robust accountability framework within which government employees have the ability, capacity and interest to resolve citizen complaints" (Pegus 2016: 11). It took Yowzit two more years of work focused on building relationships and interest among both government actors and citizen groups before their efforts with the platform began to yield positive governance outcomes among staff in municipal government service delivery departments.

Binary notions of success and failure are problematic in themselves for numerous reasons, but in the innovation field, donors, practitioners and researchers need to recalibrate their expectations and consider innovation projects as failures *only* if they do not build on existing evidence and knowledge, or make available to future innovators knowledge generated by the project. This is clearly summarised by Czarina Medina-Guce, who worked with Making All Voices Count and the Union of Local Authorities of the Philippines to identify tech-based innovations for participatory budgeting:

> **When it comes to innovation projects, exhaust all insights possible. An innovation project is short and it is a risk taken to test if a certain set of strategies could work. This means the project will most likely have ended before significant outcomes emerge. But your best contribution to the discourse is to offer as much evidence and insight as you can. *Be the literature for those who want to build on what you have learned* (Medina-Guce 2017).**

It is widely recognised that complex programmes addressing complex problems need to work in ways that allow for learning and adaptive management.[10] This is even more true when such programmes are also trying to foster innovation, for it is by documenting and communicating our learning, and adapting as we go, that we 'become the literature'. Learning and adaptive management in turn require staff and grantees who are curious and disposed to learn, and a recognition that adaptation may call for adjustments in the staff mix to ensure that the necessary skills and competencies are available. They also require facilitated spaces for reflection, learning and adaptation. Box 2 on the following page illustrates two examples of how Making All Voices Count staff and grantees occupied learning spaces created and supported by the programme – one in the form of an internal learning process, and one in the form of a set of research grants.

## Lesson 4: What gets measured and monitored needs to be what matters for effectiveness and impact, complex as this may be

In Making All Voices Count, as in many large aid programmes, there were disjunctures between the kinds of monitoring and indicators that were useful at a project level and the kinds of performance data that were needed for aggregating upwards from project level to programme level, and from programme level to the donors. Such disjunctures of scale can create perverse incentives and distortions, and make learning-focused discussions difficult within and between the different layers of the funding chain. In a programme

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10  See, for example:  Valters, Cummings and Nixon (2016); Eyben, Guijt, Roche and Shutt (2015);  Doing Development Differently (2014); Andrews, Pritchett and Woolcock (2012).

## Box 2. Creating space for staff and grantee learning

From the third year of the programme, Making All Voices Count used the *qualitative assessment scorecard* (QAS) methodology[11] to create a space for staff to reflect critically on programme performance. Three QAS workshops were held between April 2016 and August 2017, led by the programme's monitoring, evaluation and learning manager. They brought together staff from across the programme, and offered an opportunity for the programme's country engagement developers – responsible for implementing country plans – and research, evidence and learning staff to reflect together on their work.

The country engagement developers gathered evidence from across their respective country portfolios and scored changes against logframe indicators drawn from assumptions in the programme's theory of change. They analysed how the programme's activities were working to produce these changes, what was helping or hindering change, and what could be done differently to improve projects. This process equipped programme staff to support innovation by learning and managing adaptively. Taking the time to reflect on the country portfolio provided an opportunity for programme staff to assess which projects were performing well and which needed further support, and to then take relevant action. The benefits of this approach were demonstrated by several examples of projects, which, during the first workshop, were facing significant challenges, but by the third workshop – after improvements were identified and changes in course implemented – were identified as best cases.

During the last 18 months of the programme, Making All Voices Count partnered with Global Integrity

to support six Making All Voices Count grantees in '*learning journeys*': co-creating and applying a participatory, learning-centred and adaptive approach to strengthening citizen engagement in governance processes in their contexts, especially with respect to the Open Government Partnership (OGP) (Moses 2017). Global Integrity facilitated and supported the learning journeys through four face-to-face, reflective learning workshops, and through ongoing virtual support throughout the full life cycle of each project. The workshops offered valuable spaces for grantees to learn and reflect on how their projects and contexts were changing, and to benefit from peer learning and support; they reported that the workshops were vital to supporting and managing adaptation of their projects. Planning this action-learning process into the life of the six projects created more flexibility for adaptation and learning, as grantees Patrick Lim of INCITEGov and Gladys Selosa of ANSA-EAP have written:

> **The adaptive learning approach gave us space to ask whether activities in the original project design were still strategic, and whether they would contribute to the intended project outcomes – especially in the face of contingencies and changing political realities. The assurance of flexibility by the partner donor made this possible, so that changes, if necessary, were permitted and indeed encouraged** (Lim and Selosa 2017: 9).

Findings from this project are providing broad, important lessons for civil society actors, donors and OGP actors seeking to support agile open government reforms.

comprised of fundamentally different kinds of projects, outputs and outcomes, with a complex theory of change, uncritical slavery to an imperfect logframe can distort rather than illuminate.

For example, 'reach' was considered an important programme-wide indicator in Making All Voices Count's logframe, with the implication that it needed to be maximised in all projects for the programme's change goals to be met. Yet the programme's theory of change was far more subtle and differentiated than this, giving the politically motivated 'reach' indicator weak validity as a measure of programme progress. During

discussions at the third QAS workshop, several country-level programme staff reflected that reach was not, in fact, an objective of all projects, and that in some cases, encouraging it made projects less effective, not more.[12] To give just one example, Black Sash's work bringing citizen feedback into government health service monitoring in South Africa did not reach large numbers of citizens, but its use of direct community dialogues was extremely effective in engaging exactly the kind of marginalised citizens whose voices the programme sought to make count – far more so than some of the online platforms of other projects in the South Africa portfolio.

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11  The qualitative assessment scorecard was adapted from frameworks that are the intellectual property of Jeremy Holland and Irene Guijt, and have been successfully piloted in the evaluation of GirlHub (www.girleffect.org).

12  Source: QAS workshop 3 scorecards

*Each individual is uniquely attuned to the various elements that are crucial to an innovation's success: while a technologist might not see the importance of understanding different dimensions of power, a civil society activist might not understand the different risks and affordances of a given technology.*

Some donors required data on the users of Making All Voices Count-supported projects, including breakdown by sex – for the laudable purpose of ensuring gender-equitable outcomes. But in many projects, early feedback indicated that the value that users perceived in the tech that projects developed and used was precisely the opportunity to be anonymous and share *no* information about themselves. Capturing extra demographic data introduces the basic risk of putting people off, and also the potential danger to individual citizens, particularly in contexts where there is a closing of civil society space and where holding government to account entails high personal risk, including imprisonment. Such tensions and threats are real; they need to be taken seriously, discussed and mitigated in ways acceptable to both donors and implementers. Demands for disaggregated user data by donors need to be subjected to data ethics considerations and practices.

In the case of Making All Voices Count, these problems might have been avoided had the programme's theory of change been allowed to drive implementation more than the original logframe; and had logframe indicators been derived – or adjusted – based on a much more nuanced treatment of the theory of change. That this did not happen was largely due to the lack of trust in the donor–implementer relationship, alongside and variable donor attention to these issues throughout most of the programme's life cycle.

## Lesson 5: Some types of knowledge and relationships need to be viewed as valued outcomes to be pursued, rather than assumed to exist from the start

Making All Voices Count brought together varied actors from a range of backgrounds and countries, with diverse perspectives and epistemologies. They included grass-roots activists, national and local-level government officials, journalists, open data technologists, mobile app developers, staff of national and international CSOs, anthropologists and political scientists. All, in different ways, were pursuing the common goal of more accountable, responsive governance.

On the one hand, this unusually diverse alliance led to some striking creativity and effective, impactful governance work. On the other hand, it posed significant challenges in terms of supporting staff and grantees to develop new skills and capacities, engage with evidence generated by themselves and others, and reflect and learn, so as to improve the effectiveness of their innovations. Different actors understand and describe the world in different ways, which can give rise to difficulties and tensions in co-working and co-learning. Each individual is uniquely attuned to the various elements that are crucial to an innovation's success: while a technologist might not see the importance of understanding different dimensions of power, a civil society activist might not understand the different risks and affordances (potential uses) of a given technology.

One way in which the programme aimed to address this diversity was to support learning via several different pathways, as summarised in Figure 1. Grantees and staff were facilitated to go beyond single-loop learning ('are we doing it right?') to double-loop learning ('are we doing the right things? why do they or don't they work?'),[13] as they uncovered and questioned assumptions. Much of the innovation mentoring provided to Making All Voices Count grantees enabled learning of the single-loop kind, focusing on quite functional organisational development and capacity support in areas such as financial management or choosing technologies – although there were instances of double-loop learning prompted and enabled by innovation mentors, illustrated by the examples in Box 3.
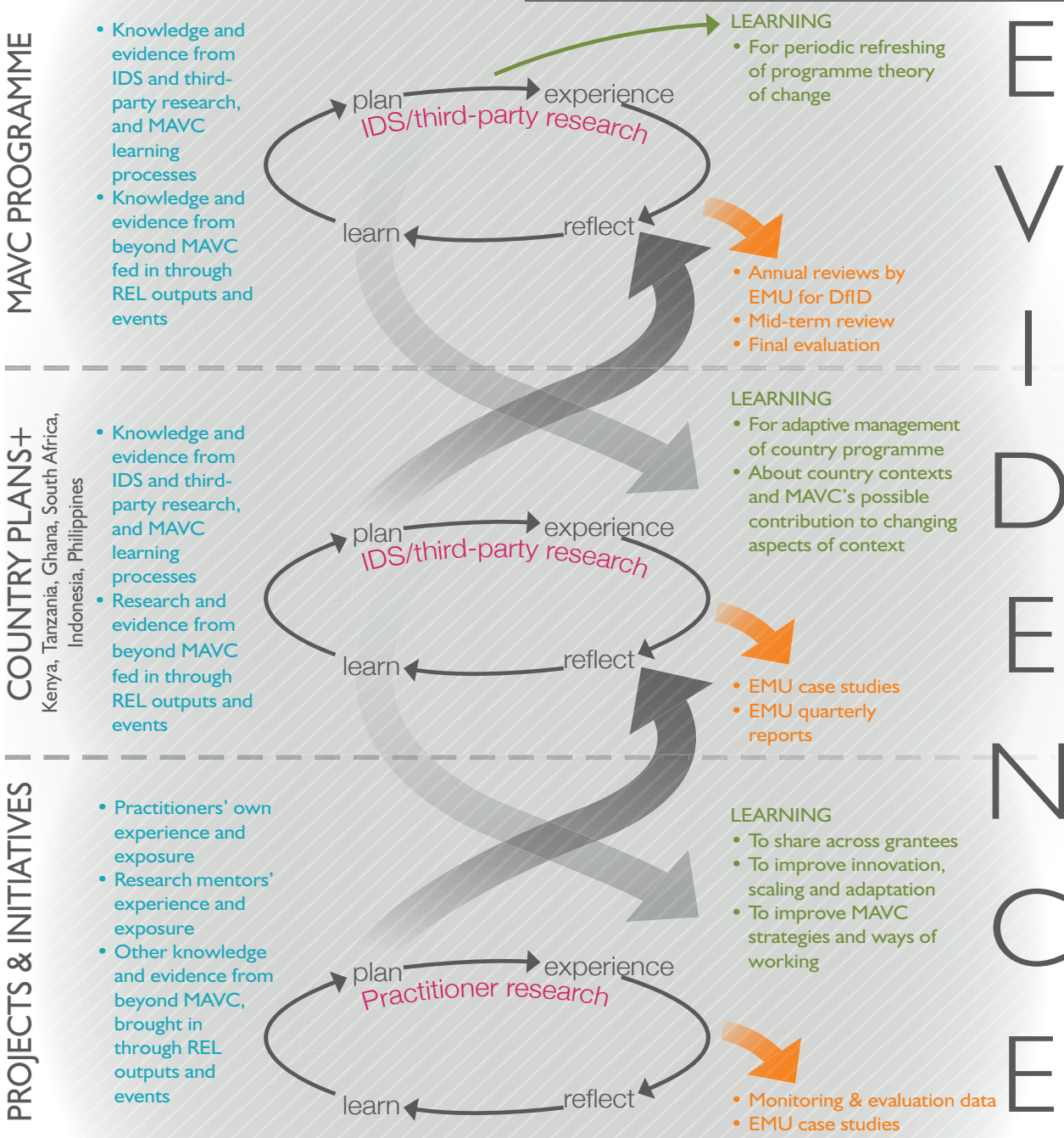
Across the programme, double-loop learning was best enabled through practitioner research and learning grants, interactions with Making All Voices

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13  See Argyris and Schön (1974) and Brock, Shutt *et al.* (2016).

**Figure 1.** Making All Voices Count's research, evidence and learning pathways



# 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 the 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

plan → experience
IDS/third-party research
learn ← reflect

**LEARNING**
- For periodic refreshing of programme theory of change

- 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
- Research and evidence from beyond MAVC fed in through REL outputs and events

plan → experience
IDS/third-party research
learn ← reflect

**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

plan → experience
Practitioner research
learn ← reflect

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

- Monitoring & evaluation data
- EMU case studies

EVIDENCE

**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

Source: McGee *et al.* 2015

## Box 3. Innovation mentoring in support of double-loop learning

Innovation mentors helped to develop and strengthen the work of the project Informed Child Protection Planning in Tanzania, led by the Community for Children's Rights (CCR). The project aimed to close the link between people's experiences, evidence and public planning to respond to violence against children.

After seeing the potential to strengthen CCR's work by using technology in a more effective way, Making All Voices Count's country engagement developer approached CCR, and connected the project staff to innovation and technology mentors within and outside of Making All Voices Count. The goal was to support CCR in reflecting on their work and interrogating the question of how technologies might help them to meet some of the challenges they were encountering. As a result of this innovation mentorship, CCR successfully

integrated technology into their work for children's rights through the development of a hotline that uses SMS to enable direct communication between citizens and councillors in Arusha.

Another example of double-loop learning through successful innovation mentoring, also from Tanzania, is the support that Deus Valentine from East African regional advocacy CSO Twaweza provided to Jamii Media on its Tushirikiane Project, which provided an online platform for citizens to engage with members of parliament around the implementation of election promises. The mentoring increased Jamii Media's understanding of and reflection on the local governance context. The result was a change in approach – from applying the same model in all constituencies to designing an approach specific to each location.

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Count country engagement developers, country-level communities of practice, and in three programme-wide learning and inspiration events.

*Practitioner research and learning grants* were designed to provide practitioners with the space and research mentoring to identify their own knowledge gaps and / or to uncover and examine their own assumptions for the purposes of learning and making their interventions more effective and impactful. These have been particularly effective in supporting deeper levels of reflection; many grantees have reported the significant value of working with their research mentors. One is Suzanne Johnson of the Foundation for Professional Development, whose project Thuthuzela Voices developed an app that users of government post-rape services in South Africa could use to give confidential feedback. She wrote of her practitioner research and learning mentor Beth Mills:

> **She really understands the role of the mentor. She never tried to take the wheel and drive the car. She asked us questions that made us think, helped us plan our next steps. She ensured that we owned our research, and it was really an empowering experience. She helped move the research forward when we were stuck. And pushed us to develop research outputs that we are proud of, which help us give a platform for the voices of the women who participated in our research** (Pegus, Johnson and Mahlalela 2017: 17).

Others are working to incorporate the knowledge generated by their practitioner research into their

own future work, but also to utilise the skills and research relationships developed while doing it. Blair Glencorse, Director of Accountability Lab, whose project Next Generation Accountability in Liberia developed innovative approaches to engaging youth in governance work, summarises:

> **The Making All Voices Count practitioner research and learning grant the Accountability Lab received in Liberia has been catalytic. It allowed us to better understand how to work with young people to build accountability in Liberia, evaluate the impact of the Lab's efforts, reinforce the evidence base for our work and begin to build a learning community around accountability on the ground. This helped to inform our new strategy and has bolstered its implementation. We are now using our co-working and innovation space, iCampus – also known as the local OpenGov Hub – as a place to build a community around these lessons going forwards, and to build on the knowledge we developed to better support the accountability ecosystem** (Blair Glencorse, personal communication).

*Programme-wide learning and inspiration events* provided excellent spaces for bringing grantees and other stakeholders together to learn from one another. Carefully designed and facilitated for peer-to-peer learning, these three events involved using elements of governance concepts and theory as discussion frameworks for grantees working in very different contexts to discuss their own challenges and learn. Appropriately modulated, the theoretical

frameworks brought practitioners new insights and ways of looking at the problems they were confronting in their own practice.[14] As one participant in the second learning event observed in the post-event feedback survey:

> I feel that important insights – some of which have been written about by researchers in the field – were explored and internalised by practitioners through peer interaction in an enabling space. I also realised through the interactions the importance of peer learning that crosses national boundaries. Gatherings like these bring second-degree connections together (response in a post-event feedback survey).

*Country-level communities of practice* such as the one seeded by Making All Voices Count in South Africa emerged from a need and desire among the programme's South African grantees for a safe space to share their experiences and navigate both individual and shared challenges. Many members of the community of practice went on to describe it as invaluable in shaping their innovations and brokering the range of different relationships necessary for their work to be effective (Smit, de Lanerolle, Braam, Byrne and Legong 2017). The flexibility and responsiveness of the community of practice structure was particularly valued, as one of the original members, Indra de Lanerolle, commented:

> The community of practice meetings made sure learning was on the agenda every few months . . . the group found that whatever the programme design or implementation challenge, they were able to find advice and solutions through the members' collective wealth of skills and experience (notes from a presentation about the South Africa community of practice; Making All Voices Count 2017).

This support was highly valued, as many grantees felt they were on new terrain with their ambitious and innovative projects.

## Looking forward

The legacy of Making All Voices Count is not only the innovative ideas supported, but also, in large measure, the knowledge generated, the new relationships and partnerships developed, the communities of practice formed, and the new ways of working which will shape future governance innovations.

Researchers often finish reports suggesting more research is needed. In the case of the application of technology for the purposes of greater government accountability and responsiveness, more research *is* needed. But to be most effective for accountable future governance, it needs to be carried out by practitioners and researchers working closely together in an action-learning mode, helping to shape governance innovations as they emerge and evolve.

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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. It focuses global attention on creative and cutting-edge solutions to transform the relationship between citizens and their governments. The programme is inspired by and supports the goals of the Open Government Partnership.

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## Research, evidence and learning component

The programme's research, evidence and learning component, managed by IDS, contributes to improving performance and practice, and builds an evidence base in the field of citizen voice, government responsiveness, transparency and accountability (T&A) and technology for T&A (Tech4T&A).

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