



AL Global Theory of Change 2018

The Accountability Lab is now almost seven years old and active in eight countries. This is the latest in a series of several Theories of Change (ToCs) that we've developed since we began in 2012- and we are proud of the fact that our understanding of the impact of our work is evolving as we iterate and learn. We prefer to understand a theory of change not just as a way to map inputs, outputs, and outcomes but as a way to understand in practical terms the causality between them; and to support double loop learning (learning that recognizes that the way a problem is defined and solved can be a source of the problem itself).

As a result, our theory of change is not an agreed, defined diagram but a living document that we amend and refine over time as we learn on the ground. As we grow we find it important to pause and reflect on our mission, vision and programs, and recalibrate where necessary. This revised theory of change not only helps us mitigate potential mission creep but also aids us in prioritizing how we allocate our resources in 2019 and beyond.

The Context

The world over, a lack of accountability is undermining fair, equal societies; the voices of the most marginalized are not heard as part of critical conversations, and leaders are not held responsible for their decisions on behalf of citizens.

Our Impact

We aim to support inclusive, accountable societies. We work with **active, engaged citizens** to take action, both individually and collectively, to ensure that those who represent them fulfill their obligations. And we support **responsible leaders** who act with integrity and prioritize the needs and interests of those they serve.

Our Assumptions

Our ToC is driven and programs are underpinned by certain assumptions:

- **All communities and voices are equal** - Accountability can only come with inclusivity and equality. The idea that all communities and voices are equal is the starting point for all of our activities; and we take the responsibility to support marginalized communities and groups as core to everything we do.
- **We live our values** - As an organization, we strive to lead by example and “walk the talk” of transparency and accountability. We strive to be accountable at all times to the communities in which we work and we model the responsible leadership we hope to see- you can read about our values here and our transparency [here](#).
- **Individuals have the ability to change institutions and systems** - We focus on accountable leaders, not accountability actions per se- which is very different to traditional approaches in this field. We connect these individuals in ways that allow them to build coalitions for change within institutions and systems and strengthen their collective identity.



Pre-conditions

We believe that the Accountability Lab can only catalyze a new generation of leaders in a given context if:

- ***The need for accountability exists*** - We work only where there is an identified need for accountability and where there is sufficient room for engagement around relevant issues- read more about our context selection process and the matrix we use to understand where to work [here](#).
- ***The political and civic space is open enough for us to operate*** - Space for accountability interventions is closing in many parts of the world, and we find creative approaches wherever we can to support efforts around these issues even when political leadership and legal frameworks make this difficult.
- ***Communities on the ground are willing to participate*** - This is a fundamental principle that has to underpin development of all kinds- communities have to be at the center of the work and drive it from the outset. We do not engage if there is no demand or meaningful relationships which allow for us to co-create solutions.
- ***We can form partnerships to facilitate change*** - This work cannot be done, or done well, in isolation. Coalition-building is a key part of our work and the ability to work with others is both critical to success and to collective learning. These kinds of partnerships must also stretch across sectoral and organizational boundaries- inside and outside government, civil society, business, and the media.

Our Inputs

We bring the following the inputs to the environments in which we operate:

- ***Relationships*** - We have spent years developing a valuable network of civil society actors, government officials, social and political activists, academics, media practitioners and businesses in every community in which we work.
- ***Human Capital*** - We have a global team of highly skilled individuals with deep expertise across civil society, government, and the private sector. Our staff can work at every level of society, from the grassroots in communities to national and international policy-change processes. Read more about our teams [here](#).
- ***Financial Resources*** - The Accountability Lab mobilizes and earns capital from around the world and from a variety of sources (public, private and corporate) to support efforts to build accountability and integrity in the countries in which we work. Read more about how we are funded [here](#).
- ***Information*** - As a team, we bring a deep understanding of the contexts in which we work through continual political economy analysis, ongoing assessments of risks and opportunities and a core focus on adaptive learning.



Cross-Cutting Themes

Our strategy is underpinned and informed constantly by **adaptive learning**, **gender equity** and **sustained engagement**. These themes influence how we make decisions, engage communities and grow as an organization.

Our Expertise

Our outputs are based on **positive messaging**, **agility** and **long-term support**. All outputs are tied to our 3 intermediate goals that ultimately shape our long-term outcomes.

Intermediate Outcomes

Our intermediate outcomes are closely connected to each other. The focus on building coalitions that include CSOs, government partners, civil servants, and members of affected communities aids our understanding of needs in terms of skills and knowledge; and this, in turn, provides the driving force behind our advocacy and policy change activities. Ultimately, this creates the space for active, engaged citizens and responsible leaders.



1. COALITION BUILDING

- **Collaboration Hubs** - As the Lab grows, we aim to create collaborative spaces that foster civil society partnerships around the world as part of the Open Gov Hub community. Currently, we manage hubs in Liberia, Nepal, and Mali and we are part of the Hub in Washington, DC. These spaces cultivate innovation, shared learning and collective action while providing cost-effective workspace to organizations and accountability change-makers.
- **Campaigns** - Popular, inclusive campaigns have become a powerful tool to spark robust conversation around accountability, integrity and civic engagement. Our campaigns include Integrity Idol, Accountability Music Awards and various initiatives that create awareness through the arts.



2: SKILLS AND KNOWLEDGE

- **Incubators and Training** - Building a new generation of responsible leaders requires skills development. Through our Accountability Incubator and themed mini-incubators we identify, support and mentor dynamic young leaders. Our Innovation Competitions, Fellowship and Integrity Schools provide focused training and development opportunities around the skills necessary to strengthen accountability and change systems.
- **Feedback Mechanisms** - Creating effective and useful feedback loops is a core component of co-creating governance. Through our Citizen Helpdesks we convene communities, civil society and government actors around feedback that drives decision-making. We also prioritize sharing our learning through open learning calls, blogs, podcasts and events such as Fail Faires and Ignite Nights.



3: COMMUNITIES FOR CHANGE

- **Multi-Stakeholder Initiatives** - We view participating in MSIs, including the Open Government Partnership (OGP), Global Partnership for Social Accountability (GPSA), the African Union and UN Global Compact as important opportunities to ensure that the voices of communities are included in global conversations that impact governance in their countries.
- **Advocacy and Policy Change** - We use our learning, data, and networks to support efforts to shift the policy and practice of accountability across the countries in which we work at the local and national levels. We also “think publicly” around accountability through writing and speaking in ways that can influence decision-making on these issues.