

Defining and Measuring Results: monitoring incremental change over time

In brief

SAVI aims to facilitate replicable and sustainable processes of citizen engagement in governance. The programme in each state is locally defined, flexible and adaptive, and results are not predictable in advance. Standardised monitoring tools are not applicable, and consequently we have evolved our tools and frameworks during the programme through processes of learning by doing. Our approach resonates with current debates on adaptive approaches to monitoring.

Partners have no accountable grants, and consequently no results framework or formal reporting requirement of their own. SAVI state teams are fully responsible for tracking and reporting partners' achievements against the programme's results framework. SAVI's results framework combines quantitative and qualitative measures of change using a basket of process and tangible results-based indicators. These are broad and open enough to accommodate a wide range of eventualities, both expected and unexpected.

We monitor tangible examples of government responsiveness to citizens which SAVI partners have significantly influenced and the processes of citizen engagement that led to these. We also measure incremental change in the overall responsiveness of state governments to their citizens, and in the effectiveness of civil society, media and State Houses of Assembly as agents of citizen voice. We track these processes of citizen engagement over time, with the expectation that ambition and impact will build through experience, and early lower level results to contribute to more significant and sustainable change.

SAVI's approach to defining and monitoring change has evolved during the course of the programme. It builds on staff members' learning from previous DFID-funded programmes in Nigeria, their efforts to manage demands from DFID whilst not compromising partners' flexibility and leadership, and processes of learning by doing. SAVI's approach is making some headway in addressing some of the well-recognised challenges involved in monitoring empowerment and accountability interventions. It also resonates with recent discussions on the value of adaptive and flexible approaches to monitoring and learning.

The challenge involved in monitoring empowerment and accountability programmes

Since 2000, there has been massive donor investment in empowerment and accountability (E&A) programming, but a major study of these interventions conducted in 2010 found the evidence-base on their impact and effectiveness to be very weak¹. Too many programme planning frameworks were found to be characterised by a general vagueness about impact, with untested assumptions and underspecified relationships linking the planned activities of demand-side actors with outcomes and impacts requiring government action. The results agenda of recent years has compounded the monitoring challenge for E&A programmes. There are clear tensions between donor demands for quick, visible, understandable and attributable results and the long-term, complex and unpredictable nature of governance reform. Matt Andrews² has reflected on the powerful incentives the results agenda provides for programmes to deliver best practice reforms and solutions that look good to an external funder but which do not necessarily

change anything or engage significantly with the complexities of the local political economy. Policy reforms that are lobbied for, debated and possibly even passed but never implemented are a common example from E&A work.

Adaptive approaches to monitoring and learning

Case studies are emerging on what works in development across sectors³ – challenging blueprint planning and the delivery of pre-planned solutions⁴. Common to all these stories of achievement is that staff and partners have been able to work in problem-driven and adaptive ways and interventions are set up in ways that are both politically smart and locally led. There is a growing and influential body of development analysts and practitioners committed to drawing on these principles to 'do development differently'.

This new thinking still requires an emphasis on results and monitoring – but in ways which address some of the rigidities that have sometimes characterised the results agenda in practice. There is increasing recognition that monitoring and evaluation (M&E) systems need to be able to measure and report results and development outcomes which are not predictable in advance. These systems also need to enable quick learning about how change happens to facilitate adaptive management during the course of the programme. They should also facilitate understanding and learning about the intermediate processes of change that have contributed to the development outcome for purposes of replication and scale-up.

SAVI as a programme is actively participating in international debates on E&A/social accountability programming, and on adaptive M&E and is sharing experiences and learning from others.

Learning by doing

Learning by doing and reflective practice are central to how SAVI works. From the start of the programme in 2008, technical staff from all ten states have come together with national and international staff on a quarterly basis. Here all the core elements of SAVI's way of working – including the approach to M&E – are, and continue to be, shaped, debated, and agreed. All of the M&E processes and tools used by SAVI have been developed, honed, worked and re-worked through such meetings. This process promotes the fit of planning and monitoring artefacts to the programme. It also builds ownership, capacity and confidence amongst all staff in the validity and use of tools and processes they have themselves participated in shaping. The aim has consistently been to forge processes and tools that first and foremost *work for partners* i.e. that help partners to facilitate authentic citizen-driven sustainable change, while also serving the needs of staff in meeting *programme management and DFID requirements*.

Roles and responsibilities

SAVI supports partners – citizen groups, media houses and State Houses of Assembly (SHoAs) – through brokering working relationships, providing mentoring, capacity building support and seed funding, rather than through providing accountable grants (See SAVI Approach Paper 2: Programme Design). Partners consequently have no SAVI results frameworks and no formal reporting requirements. This gives them maximum flexibility to focus their efforts where there is motivation, momentum and opportunity, to

plan in an incremental fashion, and to learn from doing.

SAVI state staff take full responsibility for monitoring and reporting partners' achievements against the SAVI results framework. The SAVI national team supports state teams with technical guidance and quality assurance. They also facilitate cross-state learning through quarterly comparative analysis of state performance against their respective targets, and structured reflection on findings.

The logic of our results framework

SAVI aims to build sustainable and replicable processes of citizen engagement in governance, which can take on a life of their own without external support, and which make a difference to peoples' lives in increasingly significant ways over time.

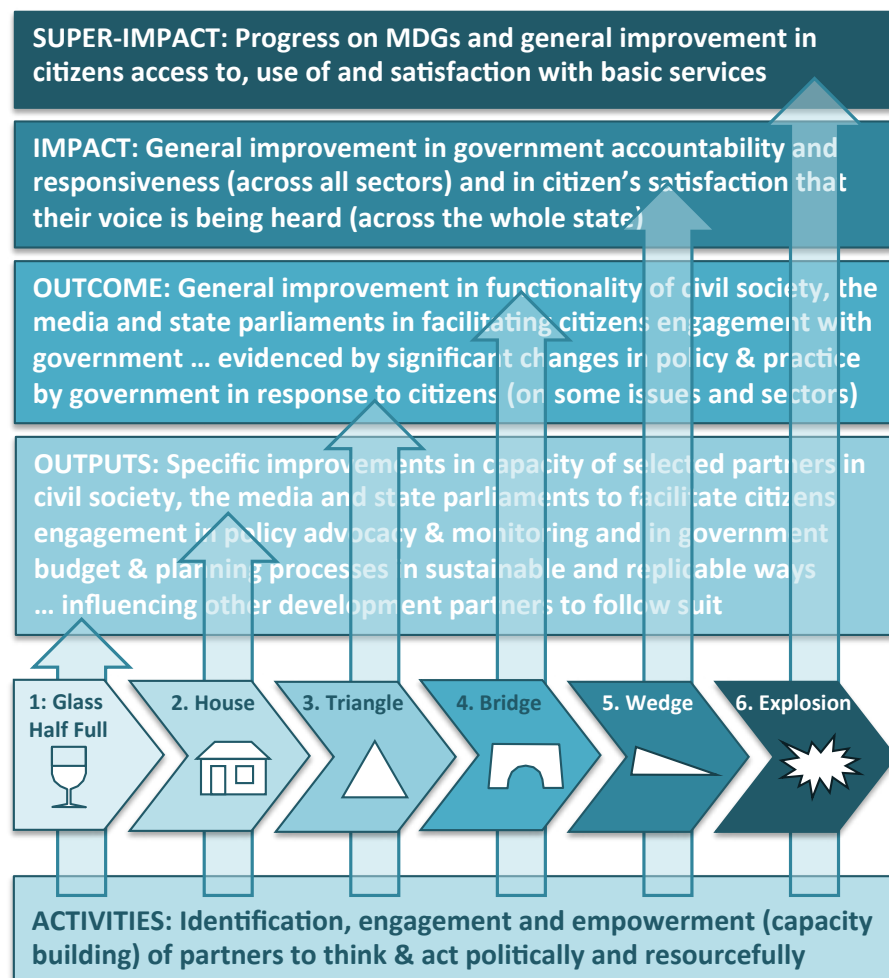
Like all aspects of SAVI, the results framework⁵ has been regularly reviewed and revised internally, particularly in the context of annual review processes and contract amendments. SAVI staff have played a central role in shaping the levels of intervention, choosing sensible indicators and means of measurement, and building flexibility into milestones and targets, with expert guidance and support from SAVI and DFID advisers. At the time of writing (August 2015), the SAVI results framework is in its fourteenth official iteration since the programme started in 2008. For the purposes of continuity, some 'bedrock' indicators have stayed constant throughout. Others have flexed as the programme has evolved, extending the principle of adaptive programming to the M&E system itself.

The *vertical logic* of the results framework is informed by our participatory political economy analysis (PEA).

- The *impact* concerns the macro level of the state government, analysed at the start of the SAVI programme through state level PEA, monitoring changes in overall state government responsiveness, inclusiveness and accountability to citizens.
- The *outcome* concerns the sectors and processes partners are focused on influencing – sectors and processes identified as key entry points through our participatory political economy analysis processes. We monitor tangible examples of state government action in response to citizen demand – such as changes in government consultation processes, policies, budgets or implementation and the processes of citizen engagement contributing to these. We also monitor general improvements in the functionality of civil society, the media and the SHoA in each state as effective agents of citizen voice.
- *Outputs* focus on our engagement with Advocacy Partnerships, selected media houses and SHoAs, and the working relationships between them. We monitor incremental improvements in the capacity of these partners to facilitate citizen engagement in policy advocacy and monitoring, and in influencing budget and planning processes, in sustainable and replicable ways.
- *Activities* are the role played by SAVI state teams in identifying, engaging and empowering partners to think and act politically and resourcefully (See SAVI Approach Paper 2: Programme Design and SAVI Approach Paper 4: Thinking and Working Politically).

The *horizontal logic* of our results framework is informed by our theory of change, which sets out stages of

How SAVI's theory of change and results framework inter-relate



effective citizen engagement in governance. We expect to see *incremental improvement in the relationship between citizens and their state government over time*, as effective processes of citizen engagement build through experience. The theory of change enables us to measure output level changes in partners' capacity, attitudes, knowledge and skills which facilitate their working relationships with each other, as well as with their state government. These short-term lower-level results gradually build partners' confidence and credibility, stimulate greater ambition and greater engagement, and contribute to increasingly significant results at outcome and impact levels. (See SAVI Approach Paper 3: Theory of Change.)

Indicators

Our indicators combine and link quantitative and qualitative measures of incremental change and tangible actions.

Objectives	Indicators
<p>Impact</p> <p>The efficiency and effectiveness of selected state level governments' use of public resources is enhanced.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Level of accountability and responsiveness of state and local government. 2. Level of citizen's satisfaction (including that of women and other socially excluded groups) with their ability to claim rights and hold government to account through democratic channels. 3. Extent of passage and implementation (by state houses of assembly and state governments) of key legislation that underpins good governance – i.e. fiscal responsibility, public procurement, freedom of information, and House Service Commission legislation.
<p>Outcome</p> <p>State houses of assembly, civil society, media and citizens demonstrate more effectiveness in demanding better performance from government and holding government to account.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Level of functionality of State Houses of Assembly as agents of voice and accountability. 2. Level of functionality of civil society as agents of voice and accountability. 3. Level of functionality of the media as agents of voice and accountability. 4. Cumulative number of demonstrable changes in policy and implementation by state government in response to public demand where there is evidence of attribution to SAVI's approach.

Monitoring tools

All of our monitoring tools⁶ started life as tools to understand aspects of the political economy of each state context. Over time, we have developed them to plan support, set targets and measure change in line with the results framework indicators and the theory of change.

Governance index (Impact indicator 1, and Outcome indicators 1-3)

The governance index⁷ consists of a set of multiple qualitative sub-indicators relating to the role of each stakeholder group – state governments, SHoAs, civil society, and the media – in responsive governance. Questions are asked of numerous independent state-based experts within these groups in multiple focal group discussions at the start of the SAVI programme in any state, and at mid and end points. For six monthly monitoring purposes, a single focus group discussion is conducted with a smaller number of these experts to discuss progress on some or all of the sub-indicators. Scores on each sub-indicator are based on described levels of functionality from one to five, with one being the lowest and five the highest. Baselines and targets are composite indices, aggregating sub-indicator scores. By combining objective measurement with learning and reflection, this tool serves the needs of external reviewers.

It also assists state teams and local partners to learn from experience, using the collective perception of these independent experts to assist with re-planning and prioritisation.

Citizens Perception Survey (Impact indicator 2)

The Citizens Perception Survey⁸ complements the governance baseline, assessing citizens' satisfaction with various aspects of state level governance. Like the governance index, it is conducted by an independent survey team at the start of the SAVI programme, at mid and end points. Questions are asked of 250-500 citizens per state (depending on the size of the state population), paying attention to social difference and inclusion. For six monthly monitoring purposes, state teams conduct their own mini-survey to assess progress on some or all of the indicators. The national team are also experimenting with the use of telephone polling. The citizens perception survey is designed both for external monitoring purposes, and to assist SAVI staff and partners to reflect, learn and re-strategise.

Results evidence sheets (Outcome indicator 4)

Outcome indicator 4 records tangible examples of government responsiveness to citizens, with evidence of contribution from SAVI partners. For each of these results, Results Evidence Sheets, completed by state teams for each of these results, set out in a concise and structured narrative:

- a PEA of the governance context prior to SAVI involvement;
- what partners did, and how SAVI supported them structured according to the stages of the theory of change;
- what the state government did as a result of this;
- an analysis of the significance of the state government action.

As partnerships and processes of engagement with government are ongoing, these results often link together, recording milestones of achievement in relation to a particular issue or process and a trend of improved citizen engagement and government responsiveness over time. We categorise results and measure trends along the following trajectories with the expectation of an improving trend over time.

	Low IMPACT		Medium IMPACT		High IMPACT
Type of government action	Process of consultation	Policy change or formulation	Budget allocation	Budget release	Implementation
Scope of government action	Issue	Process	Sub-sector	Sector	State
Scale of government action	Single local government	Several local governments	Single state government	Neighbouring state government	Several state governments (whole region)
Trend of government action	One off	Repeat	Improving trend	Self regulation	Institutionalisation

Results Evidence Sheets form the basis for results case studies⁹ which are posted on our website.

Partnership Capacity Assessment and Organisational Capacity Assessment (output indicators)

Partnership Capacity Assessment (PCA) and Organisational Capacity Assessment (OCA) tools¹⁰ are facilitated self-assessment exercises for civil society, media and SHoA partners. Partners rate themselves on a range of aspects of their internal and external functioning on the basis of descriptive benchmarks reflecting the stages of SAVI's theory of change. From the point of view of partners, these are capacity building/planning tools. PCAs and OCAs open partners' eyes to their existing capacities as well as aspects of their functioning that could be improved, and they raise aspirations. On the basis of OCAs and PCAs, partners are supported to generate their own strategic and operational organisational/partnership development plans. SAVI additionally uses OCAs and PCAs to set output level baselines and targets, and monitor incremental change. OCAs and PCAs are used by partners repeatedly for periodic monitoring, reflection and re-planning purposes.

Quarterly and annual reporting

Progress against each indicator in the results framework is captured and analysed by state teams with the support of the national team on a quarterly basis. SAVI's reporting frameworks have been developed over time to strengthen state team's analysis and evidencing of progress and results, and to map the process by which they were achieved. Quarterly technical group meetings (TGMs) between state team leaders and the national technical team provide an opportunity for further analysis of the evolving processes. We use quarterly and annual review processes not simply to package SAVI results to meet funding requirements but also as an opportunity for structured reflection, learning and re-strategising, building our collective understanding of complex governance reform processes and learning from each other.

We try not to impose our quarterly monitoring framework too rigidly on partners. Most monitoring and reporting information derives from state teams' on-going relationship with partners – routine meetings, participation in partners' activities, planning and reflection processes, investigative reporting, and from our role as a 'critical friend'.

Practical tips and conclusions

- Own your results framework, take control of it and make it work for you.
- Recognise and use the ability of the results framework to measure process results – to measure qualitative change in quantitative terms, and to look at the qualitative story behind quantitative results. Create a basket of indicators that captures both processes and tangible results.
- Outcome harvesting, or retrospective recording of results, allows reporting of real results alongside evidence of contribution, and is flexible enough to capture unplanned change.
- Create as much flexibility as you can for partners to respond to opportunity rather than tying their hands with pre-planned activities and targets.
- Support partners to plan, focus on achievable results, monitor and learn in a structured way.

Endnotes

¹ McGee and Gaventa (2011)

² Andrews, M. (2013) *The Limits of Institutional Reform in Development: Changing Rules for Realistic Solutions*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

³ ie. not only in relation to governance reform, but in many aspects of development and change

⁴ Booth and Unsworth (2014), Wild et al (2015)

⁵ savi-nigeria.org/resources

⁶ *ibid*

⁷ *ibid*

⁹ *ibid*

⁹ savi-nigeria.org/results

¹⁰ savi-nigeria.org/resources

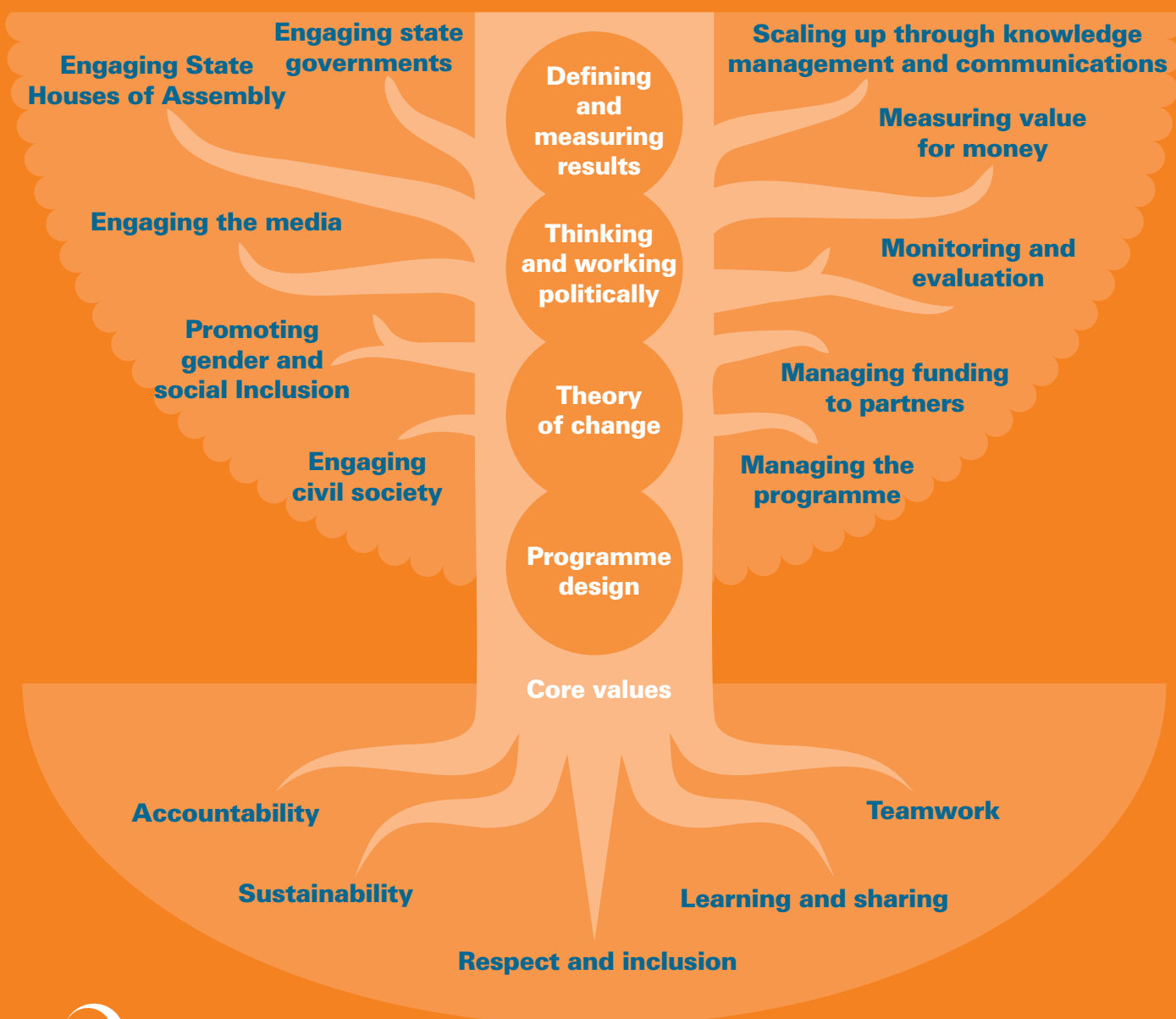
SAVI's 'knowledge tree'

The State Accountability and Voice Initiative (SAVI) is a DFID-funded programme working in ten Nigerian states promoting a culture of constructive citizen engagement in responsive state level governance. Decision-making in SAVI is largely decentralised to state level, and state staff are supported and trained to be facilitators and mentors of locally driven change. Through providing behind the scenes support, SAVI is equipping groups of citizens, the media and state legislatures with the confidence and credibility to play their part in governance in politically smart and effective ways.

SAVI's Knowledge Tree depicts how the programme works. The roots are the core values that inform everything that SAVI does. The trunk is made up of four inter-related processes that give structure to all aspects of the programme. Left hand branches describe SAVI's working relationships with partners. Right hand branches concern internal functioning and relations with DFID.

This paper is one of a series explaining these different processes and relationships.

For more information, visit our website: www.savi-nigeria.org/approach



SAVI supports groups of citizens, their elected state-level representatives and the media to be informed, credible and effective agents of citizen voice and accountability, able to play their part in promoting responsive, accountable and inclusive governance.

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