



TRUST ISSUES:

Why Trust Matters in International Development

THE RATIONALE AND FRAMEWORK FOR DEFINING TRUST IN DEVELOPMENT AND GOVERNANCE PROGRAMMING

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About Chemonics International

Chemonics is a leading international development consulting firm. In more than 80 countries, our 4,400 local development professionals work to realise a healthier, more prosperous, and peaceful world.

The complexity of development challenges necessitates collaboration. Chemonics brings together the right capabilities, technical expertise, and people to deliver, whatever the challenge. We approach every situation with a collaborative and open mindset, co-constructing knowledge and projects with the communities, governments, and organisations with which we work.

Since our founding in 1975, we have worked in more than 150 countries to help our clients, partners, and local communities take on the world's toughest challenges. Today, we reimagine global supply chains to deliver essential medicines to the right place at the right time. We take a promising new way of powering a village in Kenya and adapt it to a village in Colombia. We're one of the world's leading partners in international development, because where Chemonics works, development works.

Abstract

Trust is a vital ingredient of international development programming. The presence of trust lays the foundation for strong relationships between those involved in a project. Its absence blocks constructive collaboration.

Despite its significance, trust is hard to define and harder to measure. It is mercurial, assuming different forms in different contexts and shifting rapidly within these. The vast majority of international development programming to date has left trust out of monitoring, often focusing instead on typically easier-to-measure quantitative metrics.

This whitepaper, the first in what we hope will be a series entitled 'Trust Issues', sets out the rationale for measuring trust in international development programming. The paper then presents a framework for understanding trust to support development practitioners as they develop invaluable definitions of trust for their projects. The paper then presents principles that can help development practitioners measure trust to inform development programming.

Executive Summary

Trust is a familiar concept, yet one too often ignored in programme design. It is an essential ingredient of mutually beneficial human relationships. International development projects, particularly those in the field of governance, rely on relationships to meet their objectives. Trust smooths collaboration between project staff, donors, local stakeholders, governments, and, ultimately, the people who benefit from programming.

Despite its centrality to effective governance, trust is nebulous, mercurial, and hard to define. It means different things to different people in different contexts. As a result, trust is typically overlooked as something that can be identified and measured.

This whitepaper is Chemonics International's contribution to solving this problem. Through examining the role of trust in past programming, the paper proposes a method for assessing trust in different project contexts and ways to use trust when designing and evaluating governance programmes.

AT THE HEART OF GOOD GOVERNANCE

The whitepaper begins by explaining the importance of assessing trust. If measured effectively, trust can serve as one of the most valuable indicators of whether governance programming delivers results that citizens can benefit from and feel. This is important: programming built on trust can bolster the legitimacy of government institutions, making services more effective. The idea that trust lies at the heart of good governance is fundamental to this whitepaper. In a global context where citizen trust in governments is eroding, a focus on trust in governance is timely as well as practical.

We include a case study drawing on interviews and studies conducted by [POTENCIAR](#) – a Chemonics-led programme in Mozambique, funded by UK aid through the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO). It illuminates the role trust plays in the relationships of Mozambican citizens with maternal healthcare providers. State healthcare in Mozambique suffers from a lack of trust, generated by a culture of illicit charges and disrespect. Conversely, the ‘traditional’ system of healthcare is generally well trusted. Traditional birth attendants usually have strong social ties to their communities and often provide services free of charge. In many cases, the trust their approach generates supersedes the fact that state healthcare providers generally offer a safer service.

EMBRACE COMPLEXITY

To understand and measure trust, we must accept that complex concepts cannot be reduced to simple definitions or measures: to do so ignores complexity rather than making complexity accessible and understandable. Instead, if programmes blend qualitative and quantitative data from governance programming, they can help create a holistic definition of trust that brings multiple aspects into play.

In line with this approach, our definition splits trust into three components: integrity, accountability, and transparency. Simply put, trust in institutions and systems can be defined as the implicit understanding that they are functioning as they reasonably should. In governance programming, this understanding can be defined and measured through citizen confidence in government, citizen and government understanding of governments’ functions, and to what degree the government delivers on its mandates.

“ To understand and measure trust, we must accept that complex concepts cannot be reduced to simple definitions or measures. ”

The whitepaper then outlines the drivers of trust with a view to supporting development practitioners to build trust into programme design. It demonstrates that equitable access to quality services improves trust in government institutions – stressing the importance of helping institutions design products that meet community needs rather than simply building the institutions themselves.

Despite the advantages of a trust-led approach, it is important to assess, context by context, whether it is actually necessary to use trust as a metric. For example, a lack of project resources may render the exercise unfeasible in some situations. This whitepaper outlines a set of principles that can guide the process in situations where resources are available and the need is clear. Chief amongst these is the principle of being theory-driven to account for the complexity inherent in the process of measuring trust.

FROM NUMBERS TO NUANCE

The whitepaper concludes by describing the expected outcomes of using trust as an indicator in governance programming. By advocating for a move away from evaluation models based solely on numbers, the aim is to improve the development community’s ability to decode complex issues – like trust – while retaining the nuance essential to solving them. For practitioners, combining an assessment of trust with strategies like stakeholder mapping may make it easier and quicker to build working relationships. For donors, assessing trust could help programmes overcome the barriers that block collaboration between stakeholders, making interventions more effective and driving value for money.

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Introduction

Chemonics' rich experience of implementing international development programmes in more than 150 countries over the course of 47 years has taught us time and time again that trust is the foundation of good relationships between our staff, donors, local stakeholders, governments, and the people who ultimately benefit from our programmes. At a macro level, trust can help to maintain order, stability, and good relations between communities and those that serve them – e.g. governments and institutions. It serves as a linchpin for resolving conflicts between individuals, groups, and even countries – or aggravating them when there is mistrust. At a micro level, trust between individuals “speeds up negotiation processes and in most cases, cuts transaction costs. Trust is necessary for cooperation, which is in turn the social lubricant that allows autonomous but interdependent group members to achieve common goals harmoniously”.¹

Trust can be the key to unlocking greater programmatic impact and solving intractable challenges related to conflict, public health,² climate change,³ and other critical areas. Our research and practical experience reveal that within the international development sector, governance programmes, in particular, often do not have the expected or intended level of impact. As trust is both difficult to measure and, at times, taken for granted, it has not been considered a factor in the success or failure of these programmes. Our hypothesis below draws on the idea that trust may be the missing piece of the puzzle to improve impact even in the most challenging of environments.

Our hypothesis⁴ is:

- ▶ **IF** practitioners define and measure ‘trust’ as a key indicator in governance-sector development programming,
- ▶ **THEN** they will focus on and improve people-centred governance
- ▶ **BY** increasing the likelihood that people can and will access effective governance services
- ▶ **AND** by making those services more responsive to people’s issues and challenges
- ▶ **WHICH** can improve their overall wellbeing because they will be able to find, access, use, and benefit from governance sectors more effectively and efficiently.

Through this paper, we seek to prompt a discussion about the importance of trust in governance programmes in the international development sector and offer opportunities for further engaging in dialogue around defining, assessing, and measuring trust.

Trust is not absolute, so we are not offering a ‘one-size-fits-all’ definition, but rather a method for creating a definition based on a specific project’s goals and operating environment. By highlighting the importance of trust, our objective is that those who design, fund, and implement governance programmes in the international development sector — including but not limited to donors, implementing partners, and local and international organisations — will be able to support people-centred governance activities that are more sustainable and better able to meet the needs of individuals and communities.

Scope and Structure

The scope of this paper is to examine the role that ‘trust’ can play in furthering the impact of sustainable development programmes across the whole governance sector, including rule of law, access to justice, accountability, anti-corruption, and public administration reform.

We will first highlight the importance of trust in the sector and why donors and implementers may consider including the metric in future programming, including a case study based on our work in Mozambique. We will then offer some guiding principles for understanding and measuring trust within a particular programme or activity that examines the key components of trust and the distinction between trust and trustworthiness. Finally, we offer some recommendations for both donors and practitioners on how to best use trust as an indicator in governance programming in the international development sector.

We used both qualitative and quantitative evidence from the international development sector and our own work to inform our analysis and paint a more complete picture of change, using a combination of case studies, interviews, desk research, project results, and anecdotal evidence.

“ The scope of this paper is to examine the role that ‘trust’ can play in furthering the impact of sustainable development programmes across the whole governance sector. ”

Christopher Marshall,
Chemonics International



The Importance of Trust

Our Framework

Trust, if measured effectively, can serve as one of the most useful indicators of whether governance programming is delivering on practical change that citizens can feel and experience. A people-centric, people-led approach to governance and rule of law that is built on trust can bolster the legitimacy of government and institutions and make them more effective.⁵ Effectiveness and legitimacy are part of the mutually dependent and reinforcing “virtuous circle of governance”,⁶ whereby effective governance increases the legitimacy of governance actors and institutions, and more legitimacy increases their effectiveness.

Importantly, legitimacy “is increasingly seen both as an antidote to state fragility and as a panacea for the ills of ineffective development assistance, peace-building and even full-scale state-building interventions.”⁷ Governance actors build the trust that is foundational to this by enabling citizens to make their voices heard and see their preferences guide policies and actions. The opposite may also occur: without trust, reforms may not have the intended impact, may be misplaced in their focus, or simply take longer to succeed.

COMPLEX SYSTEMS THINKING

Governance programmes are comprised of dynamic, complex interconnected relationships and parts that require non-linear thinking and solutions.⁸ For this reason, we decided not to provide a standard definition of trust. Instead of breaking down trust in governance into a simplified, ‘one-size-fits-all’ definition, we chose to acknowledge the fact that governance programmes are implemented within a complex system that includes formal and informal institutions and norms, and social, political, and economic factors, and is comprised of complex relationships between individuals and governments.

Trust must similarly be defined through a systems-thinking perspective that embraces complexity.⁹ Complexity-systems thinking is typically applied in public health, but it

has also been adapted for governance programming, such as through USAID's Local Systems Framework¹⁰, and elements have greatly influenced the theory and practice of thinking and working politically (TWP)¹¹.

Legitimacy is especially important when talking about institutions and core services like legal, health, education, social services, etc. Trust is also integral to strong relationships between communities and duty bearers that are mutually beneficial, and can bring stability, or at least reduce instability within a community or society. Part of our hypothesis is that an increase in trust will lead to an uptake in services.

Why Look at Trust?

Trust is part of the fabric of society and everyday life. From bigger decisions like healthcare (*do I trust my doctor?*) and access to finance (*will my money be protected in the bank?*) to everyday activities such as where to eat lunch (*is the restaurant following food safety and hygiene protocols?*) and sending your kids to school (*will they be safe?*) trust forms the basis of many of these actions. Without trust, the outcomes of these decisions would be different. When looking at development programming, accounting for trust can be a critical factor in assessing why programmes work — or not.

“ [Trust] is a social shorthand. Without it, social life beyond a few tens of people can't work. No one will use anything we build, from a parliamentary ombudsman's office to a village water pump, if they don't trust it. ” **Interview with Regional Conflict Advisor, FCDO**

Trust appears to be declining around the world. According to a 2020 survey of countries in the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), only 51% of citizens surveyed expressed trust in their national government. The COVID-19 pandemic and ensuing global economic crisis, as well as political uncertainty and distrust in the media,¹² have undoubtedly contributed to this. During the COVID-19 pandemic, “trust in public institutions has been vital for governments' ability to respond rapidly and to secure citizen support”,¹³ the OECD reports, and vaccine hesitancy can stem from governments' previous abuse of citizens' trust.¹⁴ Although the scope of this paper is primarily focused on countries outside the OECD — developing economies and/or nations with weaker or not fully established legal and governance systems and institutions where donors such as USAID and the UK's FCDO tend to focus their support — opinion surveys from these regions had similar results to the OECD. Based on data from Afrobarometer and Latinobarometer, between 2012 and 2018, the percentage of the population with confidence or trust in their national government or parliament steadily declined in Africa to less than 50%. It sharply declined in Latin America, down to less than 25%.¹⁵

Trust is what gives citizens confidence in their governments and institutions and motivates them to use and depend on these services. Trust and stability often reinforce one another. Measuring trust can help shed light on whether citizens find corruption and the rule of law to be significant challenges. Understanding the value of trust — and the cost of mistrust — can help promote stability or, equally, undercut democratic institutions. The World Justice Project's 2019 report notes that an estimated 1.5 billion people cannot obtain justice for civil, administrative, or criminal justice problems, 4.5 billion are excluded from the opportunities the law provides, and 253 million live in extreme conditions of injustice.¹⁶

CASE STUDY

Trusted Counsellors Aid Victims of Violence in the West Bank

Aysha, a young woman in the West Bank, had nowhere to turn in a moment of crisis. Her marriage had begun to disintegrate. Tension between Aysha and her husband escalated into gender-based violence (GBV). Desperate to salvage her marriage and protect herself, she sought counsel from those in her life that she trusted. However, Aysha's primary advisors — her brothers and 80-year-old father — could not fully understand her situation. They insisted the only solution was for Aysha to divorce her husband, but she needed a trustworthy professional who was trained in dealing with these types of issues without causing further harm to Aysha or her family. She finally found the guidance she sought from a female social worker who had done an internship in the Enhanced Palestinian Justice Program (EPJP), a programme in the West Bank funded by USAID between 2013-2018.

“As a woman with four brothers and old parents, I felt like I was talking to the sister I always wished I had when I spoke with the social worker,” Aysha explains. “We are both women, so we understand each other.”

The EPJP offered specialised training through GBV counseling programmes and support to the National Referral System (NRS) in the West Bank. The NRS provides a unified platform through which women who are victims of GBV can seek health, social, and legal support. However, despite awareness of and access to the platform, people like Aysha may not have ever used this service if they did not trust the counsellors. Trust in the counsellors was built in two ways: 1) providing specialised training in GBV to family counsellor interns to ensure they were competent and able to provide adequate support to their clients, and 2) hiring counsellors who shared attributes with those they supported, such as hiring female social workers to work with women affected by GBV.

To protect identities and ensure safety, the names of individuals in this case study have been changed.

When assessing the role of trust in relationships, it is important to note that conceptions of trust are culturally sensitive. The nuances of the people, places and specific context influence the way trust should be defined and used. It is particularly important and effective to combine trust analysis with gender, equality, and social inclusion (GESI) considerations to help understand how far programming is having an impact on the hardest-to-reach groups. Similarly, GESI programming can be more effective when programmes factor trust in as a key indicator for assessing both the status quo and progress against programme goals and objectives (*see box below*).

Within international development programmes, trust accelerates impact by helping advance relationships with some stakeholders more quickly and with greater certainty, leaving more time to achieve programme outcomes and impact. For the [USAID-funded Strengthening Public Accountability in Parliament \(Damal\) programme](#) (2019-2021) in Somalia, for instance, Chemonics used a co-creation approach to technical assistance that ensured trainings and support were participatory and needs-based — building trust and strong personal connections between the project team, assembly and committee

leadership, and parliamentary staff. By focusing on building trust as a key indicator, the project team was able to establish political will and create buy-in with key stakeholders. This proved crucial to achieving the project's technical assistance objectives, including supporting nine committees related to financial oversight, training 135 ministers and government staff in oversight duties, and facilitating 16 executive oversight actions undertaken by the legislature.¹⁷

Below, we share a case study from Mozambique based on interviews and research we conducted in 2021 (see Annex A). It looks at the network of relationships governing access to maternal healthcare in Mozambique and the importance of bringing together multiple stakeholders across the formal-informal services spectrum, if citizen trust is to be improved.

“ Within international development programmes, trust accelerates impact by helping advance relationships with some stakeholders more quickly and with greater certainty, leaving more time to achieve programme outcomes and impact. ”

**Christopher Marshall,
Chemonics International**

CASE STUDY

Formal Versus Informal Healthcare in Mozambique

WHAT IS THE POTENCIAR PROGRAMME?

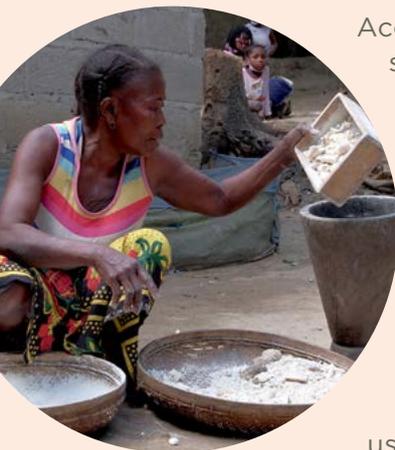
With funding from UK aid, the Transparency and Accountability for Inclusive Development Mozambique project, also known as [POTENCIAR](#), seeks to improve maternal healthcare in Mozambique through positive, system-wide change. The Chemonics-led programme supports initiatives that make the state more responsive to citizens' needs, promoting a fair distribution of resources and services by cultivating dialogue and joint initiatives between citizens, civil society, and government bodies.

Building citizen trust in government services is a critical component of POTENCIAR's approach. In July and August 2021, Chemonics travelled to the northern province of Nampula to interview maternal healthcare workers, traditional birth attendants, and the women and families they support. The interviews were designed to inform POTENCIAR's understanding of the role that trust plays in Mozambicans' relationship with maternal healthcare services. This case study was created using the stories and data gathered during this trip.

Through such knowledge-gathering initiatives, the programme hopes to understand how aspects of the trusted informal healthcare system can be integrated into the underused formal system. POTENCIAR's ultimate goal is to improve the government's ability to respond to its citizens' needs, improve uptake of state healthcare services, and achieve progressive institutional change.



Rute stands outside her home holding her child in her arms.



Traditional birth attendant Muaquera performs a variety of important roles in her community.

Access to healthcare is a constitutional right in Mozambique. However, the state healthcare system is underused by Mozambican citizens, partly due to the lack of trust citizens have in it. Studying the country's maternal healthcare service helps us understand why these issues of trust exist and how they hinder the state's ability to provide Mozambicans with high-quality healthcare.

In 2020, the government reported that [80% of Mozambicans](#) primarily use 'traditional' healthcare. In the field of maternal healthcare, this typically means choosing to use 'traditional birth attendants'. Traditional birth attendants are Mozambican women who serve, often for free, other local women who are unable or unwilling to use state maternal health services. Historically, they have been the main caregivers for Mozambican women during childbirth. They often carry the trust of communities that formal maternal health providers often do not. Their role extends beyond the birthing process: they are often responsible for advising young women on matters like menstruation, pregnancy, and

marriage. These trusted social connections have proven to be an important factor for Mozambican mothers.

The formal healthcare system must find a way to establish a similar relationship with its users. As we will see, close collaboration between different healthcare providers may offer a solution that benefits all parties.



A collection of tokens used to denote a patient's place in the queue.

THE ROOTS OF MISTRUST IN FORMAL HEALTHCARE

Public wariness of the healthcare system largely stems from allegations of illicit charges and instances of verbal abuse and disrespect. The prevalence of illicit charges is in part due to Mozambique's longstanding economic struggles. In the second half of the twentieth century, a lack of government funding for state healthcare caused health workers' salaries to plummet. Since then, illicit charges have been a feature in parts of the health sector. On the other hand, the services of traditional birth attendants are largely free, supported only by voluntary contributions, sometimes in-kind, based on what the family can afford.

As for the verbal abuse by health workers that women have reported, negative behaviour continues despite government attempts to humanise services. Research from a [2019 study](#) revealed that in Mozambique's Southern region: "Prevalence of disrespect and abuse ranged from 24% in the central hospital to 80% in the district hospitals. The main types of disrespect and abuse reported were lack of confidentiality or privacy, being left alone, shouting, scolding, and receiving treatment without permission."

BRINGING INFORMAL SECTOR SUCCESS INTO FORMAL SETTINGS

For many years, then, Mozambicans have had access to two maternal healthcare systems: the formal state-run healthcare system delivered by healthcare professionals and the informal local system delivered by traditional birth attendants. Both are imperfect. The former suffers from a lack of trust stemming from illicit fees, disrespect, and abuse, and the latter from a lack of training and equipment.

In July and August 2021, the POTENCIAR project travelled to the northern province of Nampula to interview maternal healthcare workers, traditional birth attendants, and the women and families they support. The team aimed to examine the role that trust plays in Mozambicans' relationship with maternal healthcare services. Ultimately, the programme hopes to understand how the effective approaches of the trusted informal system can be integrated into the formal system, improving the state's ability to respond to its citizens' needs.



Chemonics visited the Carapira Health Unit in Nampula to understand how they are building trust in the community.

In summer 2021, Rute was pregnant with her second child. “When a woman goes to deliver, they [health providers] usually ask for money,” Rute told us. “If you don’t give money, you’re kept waiting...”. Not only did Rute pay when her daughter was born, but the family began saving immediately for the delivery of their next baby. Paying illicit charges means you get immediate access to medical professionals. For a heavily pregnant woman, there is nothing more dangerous — for herself and her baby — than endless waiting when her waters break and she goes into labour. “My husband agrees,” Rute said. “It’s a health issue.”

In these circumstances, it is easy to see why many Mozambican women rely on informal healthcare providers. Zainabo, a traditional birth attendant from Nampula, sheds further light on the issue:

“That little girl there [pointing], her name is Yaya. I was the one who helped her to be born. Before her birth, her mother was in hospital for three days, but then they sent her home. She came to stay with me, and a day later, she gave birth. I cared for her during childbirth and then removed the placenta which had remained inside her.”

Crucially for the residents of poorer regions like Nampula, most traditional birth attendants don’t request payment. “Tomorrow I might need help as well. I’m not afraid of doing what I do. You just need courage. And patience,” says Zainabo.

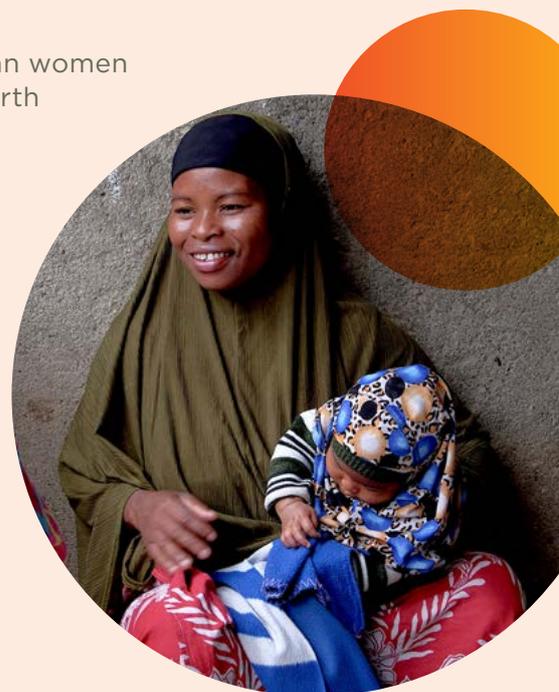
UNITING FORMAL AND INFORMAL HEALTH SYSTEMS

Healthcare organisations working in Nampula are keenly aware of the need to improve trust in the state healthcare system, primarily through improving the quality of the service provided. “In general in Mozambique... people first resort to traditional medicine and only then go to formal services if the former does not solve their problems,” says Manuel Boene, who works for an NGO focusing on child and maternal health. “Even in the cities, we observe this”.

Eulália Leonor from the Niwanane NGO echoes Manuel’s concerns. “They comment on the service in the health units, that it has been slow. They wait in long lines which makes them think twice when they have to use those services again.”

Encouragingly, many state healthcare providers are leveraging traditional birth attendants’ bond with their communities. Both parties understand that collaboration is beneficial to the wellbeing of women, children, and their families. José Artur is the Clinical Director of the Carapira Health Unit in Nampula. He says he considers traditional medicine to be a vital ally:

“The traditional midwives now work in coordination with us, mobilising the communities, explaining the methods of family planning, and if necessary, referring people to the



Zainabo is used to stepping in to help women in her community give birth.

health unit. We have been training the traditional midwives for this work. For example, the woman can choose the pill or take an injection as a method of contraception.”

The potential of this partnership is clear. A functioning relationship between traditional birth attendants and their local health centres can be the difference between life and death. “Once I met a lady who was giving birth,” explains Muaquera, who has been working as a traditional birth attendant since 1981. “She was in bad shape. I took a *capulana* [a colourful cloth used by women in Africa] and laid her down on the ground and thus helped her in delivering the child. Then, together with her eldest daughter, I accompanied her to the hospital and left her there with the midwife.”



Laura Inácio tends to mother and baby at the Carapira Health Unit.

Traditional birth attendants know that, despite their experience, they lack the equipment to make childbirth genuinely safe. Muaquera laments this reality, “I don’t have gloves. I wash my hands with soap and water.”

A TWO-WAY RELATIONSHIP

State midwife Laura Inácio emphasises the trust that underpins their relationship with traditional healthcare:

“These midwives know that if there are complications in the birth back in the community, they can always count on us to help the patient. Even if necessary, we can transfer that patient to a more capable unit, for example, with caesarean section services, in order to save the patient and her baby.”

José Artur is confident that the difficulties facing the healthcare sector can be overcome and that an improvement in the quality of care will drive up trust amongst users:

“I say that because we do a constant evaluation. We have been listening to the communities to be able to see the level of satisfaction with the health unit’s attendance. Then we make an action plan to correct what is failing and to improve.”

He stresses that his work is underpinned by the constant gauging of levels of patient trust.

All photos in this case study were taken by Emídio Josine.



Under Eulália Leonor’s guidance, the Niwanane NGO seeks to unite Mozambique’s formal and informal healthcare sectors.



How to Understand and Assess Trust

At Chemonics, we believe that complex concepts like trust cannot be reduced to simple definitions or measures — to do so ignores their complexity, rather than making complexity accessible and understandable. We understand that complex concepts are non-binary. They exist within and often play a critical role in complex systems either as an emergent feature of those systems or as a component of how the system functions.

We embrace custom blends of qualitative and quantitative data to assess and measure complex concepts that inform our impact across our programmes (see *quote*). In Syria, for example, when trying to understand ‘emotional resilience’ (a famously hard to define and assess concept), Chemonics piloted a new evaluation method that drew upon the field of narrative psychology¹⁸ and sensemaking methodologies¹⁹ to assess how education interventions may impact children’s emotional resilience. The method asked children to share stories about their own experiences and used ‘self-signification’ questioning techniques²⁰ to ask them to interpret their own narrative rather than a third party doing so. This gave us the depth of insight that could complement the quantitative, but overall less informative, resilience scores that came out of a separate measurement exercise. Even in writing this paper, we followed this practice, blending primary data collection approaches such as one-on-one interviews in Mozambique with existing secondary qualitative and quantitative data to inform our analysis.

“ Narrative and, more broadly, qualitative evidence are the most valuable tools in our arsenal when working with complex problems. The effects of our interventions are multivariate and often unexpected. We cannot explain everything using just numbers. We need to understand why or how things happen, not just what or how much. ”

Niki Wood, Senior MEL & Research Specialist, Chemonics UK Division

Trust is an excellent example of a complex concept: it is non-binary, fluctuating, and can only truly be interpreted through the context in which you try to understand it. Therefore, the understanding of ‘trust’ and any associated assessment of it must be done in a bespoke, contextually-responsive, and mixed-methods manner.

Defining Trust

A complex — and at times nebulous — concept like ‘trust’ needs to be defined before it can be measured. Trust, like safety, should be measured in degrees, not as an absolute. The question to ask is not “is there trust or mistrust,” but rather:

- ▶ What does trust look like in the context we are evaluating?
- ▶ What type of trust is important to us?
- ▶ Where can trust be found?
- ▶ Where is trust most lacking?
- ▶ Between whom does trust exist?
- ▶ Does trust exist, or is it broken?
- ▶ How does trust manifest?
- ▶ How is trust changing?

For each programme and context, trust will look different. Its changeable nature stems from the fact that trust is both a feature of an informal system of people’s interactions and also an important part of more formal, but complex, human systems. As such, instead of presenting a standard definition of trust, we propose some of the key components, drivers, and degrees of measurement that, from our experience, can be used to define the meaning of ‘trust’ in a specific programme, activity, or country.

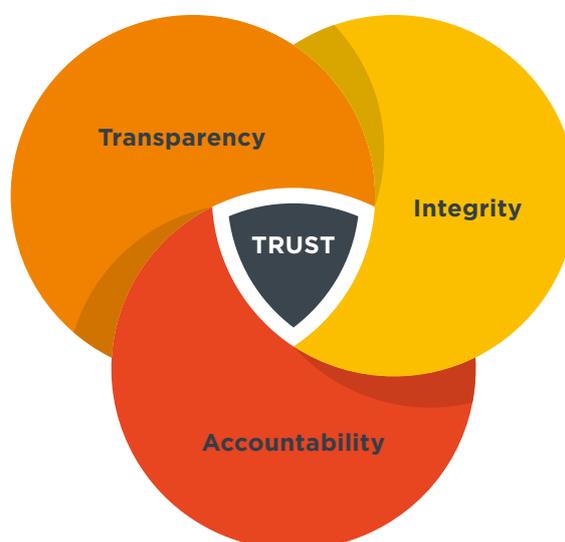
KEY COMPONENTS

In the governance sector, trust is an important relational factor between citizens, governance structures (formal or informal), or their representatives. Trust can be defined within a specific project or context as including one or more of the following key components:

- 1. Integrity:** Listening and meeting the needs of citizens; confidence that concerns, positions and opinions will be heard and considered honestly and fairly.
- 2. Accountability:** Provision of services (*will services be provided to me?*) and effectiveness of offered services (*will they solve my problem?*), including the perception of whether the service provider has both the capacity and the capability to provide the service.
- 3. Transparency:** Absence or minimisation of risk, providing equal and equitable access to information and services.

More simply, trust in institutions and systems can be defined as the implicit

THREE COMPONENTS OF TRUST



understanding that these entities are functioning as they reasonably should. In governance programming, this understanding can be defined and measured through citizen confidence in government, citizen and government understanding of government's functions, and to what degree the government delivers on its mandates.

On the [USAID-funded Strengthening Somali Governance \(SSG\) project](#), for example, trust played a factor in both the relationships with beneficiaries (see *box*) as well as with key local stakeholders. The first 18 months of implementation were mired by ineffectiveness and distrust caused by siloed communication, a lack of transparency around decision-making, and strong personalities driving their own competing interests. As a result, project staff overpromised to stakeholders what was possible for the programme to deliver because their assumptions were based on relationships that lacked transparency, accountability, and integrity. Similarly, the relationship with beneficiaries also lacked trust due to local stakeholders' initial relationships with the first generation of staff and their perception of the project's ability to deliver on its stated objectives.

“ I think measuring trust — specifically trust between the programme and beneficiaries — would have been a major value add to the Somalia programme. We have useful lessons learned from this experience but it is all anecdotal. If we had been measuring this from the beginning, we would have been able to see the root causes of the problems sooner and worked to address them. ”

Former Project Manager, Strengthening Somali Governance Project, Chemonics

A concerted effort by a new project team and leadership to operate with full transparency with the donor and relevant communities, and clarify the project's limitations based on its scope and funding mechanism with government counterparts and the local community, eventually turned the project around. At the end of four years, SSG successfully held 78 consensus-building forums across Somalia, supported the drafting of 18 laws, and provided 10,275 individuals with voter and civic education.

KEY DRIVERS

Effective service provision is a critical first step in triggering the self-reinforcing virtuous circle of governance.²¹ Service providers must focus on the quality of their services and ask themselves the following questions:

- ▶ *Am I responding to the actual needs of the people I am supposed to support?*
- ▶ *Are services accessible and felt to be accessible, including for marginalised and disadvantaged groups?*
- ▶ *Are services equitable and provided so that all can receive them in the same way and to the same quality?*

In practice, this represents a change in focus. It would lead to a shift from governance programmes focused on institution building — e.g. creating manuals, drafting new laws and policies, and hosting workshops of service providers gathered together — to those that help institutions grow in relationship with those whom they serve. Effective provision should consist of services and products designed to meet the needs of the individual and the community, not the institution's. Effective services require proactive communication of any difficulties or delays affecting service provision.

The drivers of trust are built upon its core components (integrity, accountability, transparency). Furthermore, identifying the drivers of trust in institutions can help us understand the determinants of trust between people — or ‘interpersonal trust’. Interpersonal trust, also known as social capital, is “important in rural areas of developing countries where formal markets are often under-developed, and much of the economic transactions take place in the informal sector”.²²

Both institutional trust and interpersonal trust contribute to wellbeing, economic growth, and stability, and both can be undermined by corruption — a key driver of mistrust — which occurs when integrity, accountability, and transparency are lacking or insufficient. A 2013 case study looking at the determinants of social capital in Bangladesh found that “the significant influence of institutional trust in social trust regressions suggests that policy reforms that reduce corruption are likely to improve social trust via increasing institutional trust in rural Bangladesh.”²³

However, although the data from Bangladesh suggests that institutional trust correlated strongly with interpersonal trust, other factors also significantly affected interpersonal trust between and amongst groups, such as religion.

Similarly, building upon the successes of SSG (2014-2018) and the UK government’s legacy Department for International Development’s Support to Four State Assemblies (Gole-Kaab) project (2018-2020), the [USAID-funded Damal programme](#) (2019-2021) implemented by Chemonics was able to successfully strengthen the Federal Parliament of Somalia’s ability to fulfill its legislative and oversight responsibilities. Damal was Somali-led, which proved critical in building trusted relationships with key stakeholders (interpersonal trust), and demand-driven, further enhancing institutional trust by ensuring the programme could respond to federal parliament objectives.

MEASURING TRUST IN DEGREES

In this paper, we take the position that trust is differentiated, not absolute, which is critical to understanding how, why, when, and, even, if to measure trust within a project. The principles we present (see *Assessing Trust*) aim to help foster more trust in the trustworthy and less trust in the untrustworthy.²⁴ The key attributes that define ‘trustworthiness’ — competency, honesty, reliability — are similar to the key components we listed above for ‘trust’ (integrity, accountability, transparency). As such, the relationship between trust and trustworthiness can be viewed similarly to the relationship between legitimacy and effectiveness in the ‘virtuous circle of governance’ — that is, they are mutually reinforcing.

Although some theory contends that trustworthiness comes before trust because trustworthiness is what we judge and trust is our response to that,²⁵ others contend that trust precedes trustworthiness as trust is seen as a risk taken, whereas trustworthiness is a response based on the reliable behaviour of the person who first demonstrated trust.²⁶

We focus primarily on the concept of ‘trust’ here. It is worth noting, however, that assessing the attributes and drivers of ‘trustworthiness’ may pose some differences to ‘trust’ and be more context-dependent, especially within informal systems and structures. Subsequently, measuring ‘trustworthiness’ may require different assessments to measuring trust. Measures or approaches for defining ‘trustworthiness’ lay outside the scope of this paper.

Assessing Trust

As mentioned earlier, one has to understand trust within its proper and unique context before considering assessing — or even measuring — it. A critical question for a programme is whether the programme should assess or measure trust at all. There are two elements to be conscious of here:

- ▶ **Entering the system as an actor.** It has long been understood that an evaluator wields a lot of power when entering a situation; fundamentally, people act similarly to light particles in that they behave differently when under observation. As such, entering a complex system to assess or measure a delicate concept, such as trust, must be considered carefully. The potential to disrupt a trust-building process by measuring it (either too early or at all) is very high.
- ▶ **Assessing and measuring with integrity.** Trust is a highly nebulous and challenging concept to pin down definitionally, let alone assess and measure. It is tempting to reduce the assessment to a simple binary question of ‘does it exist’ or to try to quantify it. Doing so will likely fail to capture reality; complex concepts need complex measures. To assess or measure appropriately and with integrity, a programme must be committed to putting forward the resources required to capture a range of evidence that will collectively illustrate the current state of trust. This requires temporal, human, and financial resources that a project may not have available. A programme must consider whether they should indeed assess or measure trust if they are not able to provide these resources.

In our experience as both an implementer and an emerging provider of evaluation services, we believe these two elements must be explored collaboratively with a team to determine if a project should try to assess trust. If the resources are available and there is no risk to disrupting a delicate process, then there are a few principles that we believe will aid the assessment of trust in a programme:

- 1. Be theory-driven.** Trust is complex: it fluctuates, changes over time, has tipping points and is subject to ‘path-dependency’²⁷. If improving, developing, or otherwise affecting trust is an integral part of a programme’s objectives, it must be part of its theory of change and explicitly unpacked.²⁸ Careful theorising will allow for better assessment as it provides a detailed hypothesis to guide the assessment as well as to be tested by the assessment. To put it simply, when going on a journey, one does not set off without planning a route at the level of detail needed to guide you. At Chemonics, we often use the ‘Useful Theory of Change’ model (see Annex 2) and find its clear unpacking of behaviour change and integration with complex causation allow for us to better define how we will bring about trust, such that we can measure it.²⁹
- 2. Use your evidence.** Trust has to be understood adequately, and as such, drawing on as much evidence that exists as possible is critical. If your programme has completed a Political Economy Analysis,³⁰ or similar contextual assessments, ensure this is used to inform your choice of methods.

- 3. Resist the allure of the binary.** It may feel like all one needs to do is survey people and ask ‘do you trust your government?’ with a ‘yes’ or ‘no’ response, but this is reductive. Just as we have accepted there is no ‘one-size-fits-all’ definition of trust, the concept will be interpreted differently by every responder. This means that while person a said ‘no’ and person b said ‘yes’, had they used the same definition, they may have both said ‘yes’. Although reducing things to such simple questions will give you a neat percentage score of ‘yes versus no’, it does not actually present a representative picture.
- 4. Throw a wide net.** As above, do not be tempted to try to design one method to do so. Be willing to throw a wide net and blend various data collection approaches that reach a wide sample. This targeted but wide approach will allow you to capture the range of factors that are relevant to you. For example, on our UK government-funded Western Balkans Rule of Law Initiative, we are looking at leveraging a *SenseMaker* approach³¹ to surveying to capture both narrative and quantifiable sentiments and supplementing this with more focused interviews. This is an appropriate blend due to the focused nature of how we are interpreting ‘trust’ on the programme. For a wider interpretation, one may wish to introduce additional methods to capture other aspects of ‘trust’ under definition. For example, methods such as PhotoVoice’s³² showcase ‘trust’ from different angles.
- 5. More data is not better data.** Don’t use a deep-sea trawler to catch a minnow. More data is rarely good data: the right data is good data. As such, when identifying the blend of methods you will use to assess trust, ensure that they meet the MECE criteria³³. This sense-check of your approach ensures that you only use what is necessary for your assessment. Similarly, ensure your sample size is balanced: it must be representative of the populations you want to understand. Equally, it is important not to use such a large number that resources are wasted.
- 6. Don’t fear the redesign.** Assessments of complex concepts are rarely perfect on the first attempt. It is best practice always to pilot and test an approach for quality. If the pilot indicates something is not landing, do not fear adapting or even wholly re-doing your assessment; ultimately, we have a duty to ensure we produce accurate evidence, and knowingly using inaccurate measures is irresponsible.

Within each of these principles, customisation is key. Trust must be defined for every context and, likewise, should be assessed or measured based on the nuances of the operating context. Although there is no ‘one-size-fits-all’ approach to capturing this concept, these principles serve as guiding points for donors and implementers to determine whether and how they should define and measure trust for their programmes. If so, teams must put the time in to review relevant approaches undertaken by others and be willing to customise their own approach.



Expected Outcomes

Based on our hypothesis, we believe that including trust as a key indicator in governance programming can help improve the effectiveness of those programmes and, eventually, contribute to better people-centred governance. By igniting a discussion on principles for defining, measuring, and including trust as an indicator to assess impact, we seek to:

- ▶ Help donors, implementers, international and global partners, and other stakeholders better understand progress in the governance sector by moving away from a model based primarily on numbers. For example, while “number of judges trained” can be a useful indicator to measure impact, that number is not the impact itself.
- ▶ Allow for improved comparison between interventions both within the same programme and/or with other programmes when similar definitions and measurement approaches are used for trust.
- ▶ Retain the nuance and specificity of each programme and operating context.

For donors, Value for Money (VfM) — or a Cost-Benefit Analysis (CBA) — is a critical consideration. For the UK government this means maximising “the impact of every pound spent to improve poor people’s lives” and encompasses the 5Es framework: economy, efficiency, effectiveness, cost-effectiveness, and equity. Much of development programming in the governance sector can successfully control and manage economy — which includes inputs, such as staff time and other materials — and efficiency — which includes methods and processes. However, when it comes to effectiveness, which accounts for programme outcomes, and equity, there is still work to be done. With a well-defined framework and guiding principles for defining and measuring trust, the international development community may be able to design and implement programming that better addresses these aspects. Ultimately, this will affect cost-effectiveness, programmatic impact, and the sustainability of interventions.

For practitioners, accounting for trust at the outset of a programme by using strategies such as stakeholder and relationship mapping can go a long way towards building trust quickly and effectively and leaving more time (and budget) for programme activities and achieving impact.

For beneficiaries, trust is dynamic and interconnected. Trust in individuals reflects trust in institutions, and vice versa, and their trust in one sector, such as health, could affect their level of trust in another, such as education. Trust between institutions and sectors

is also equally crucial. Socio-economic factors, cultural identity, and governance types (e.g. democracies versus authoritarian regimes) may also play a role in gauging levels of trust and how it manifests in their interactions with donor programmes.

Building trust takes time. To date, trust has not been treated as a critical indicator of programme effectiveness, and therefore building — or maintaining — trust has not been a priority. For international development programmes where trust-based engagement is less common, we need to establish a process to incorporate trust more visibly. To mitigate trust being misplaced — or misused — it is critical to have clear programme goals and objectives that are responsive to the needs of those the programme is intended to serve, transparency in decision-making across all stakeholders, and credibility of these stakeholders.

“ To date, trust has not been treated as a critical indicator of programme effectiveness, and therefore building — or maintaining — trust has not been a priority. ”

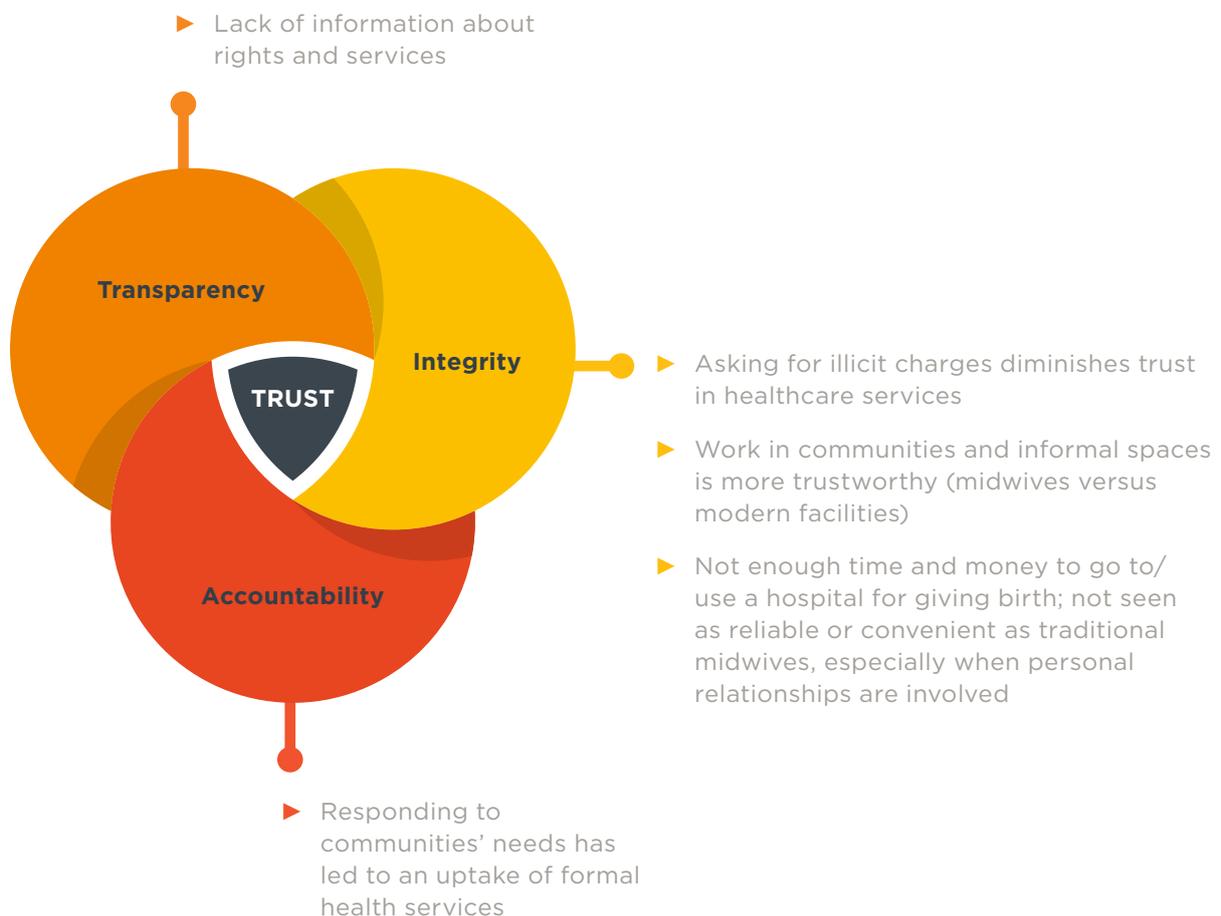


Mozambique Case Study Design and Methodology

In July and August 2020, we interviewed individuals from different groups and sections of society: traditional midwives, state health midwives, NGO workers, pregnant women and mothers and a senior local government health official. Interviewees were from Nampula and Monapo in Northern Mozambique. Our questions focused on the following key themes:

- ▶ **Relationship with government:** What is their relationship with healthcare providers? How does their access to healthcare services impact their trust in different state bodies (district, provincial, and national)? How did the pandemic affect their trust in government institutions?
- ▶ **Relationship with maternal health service providers:** What are the interviewees' perceptions of the government's maternal health services? If given the choice, would they prefer to use government services, or services run by NGOs? Do they trust the midwives and healthcare workers to provide a good service?
- ▶ **Relationship with traditional or alternative healthcare and governance structures:** Do people access alternative or traditional healthcare services? Do they trust traditional healthcare services? Why or why not? How do these services interface with their own identities?
- ▶ **Trust building:** What segments of healthcare services, and to some extent government, do they trust and distrust? For instance, do they trust doctors but distrust nurses? Do they trust healthcare workers but not politicians? Do they trust local government but not central government?
- ▶ **Transparency:** What information do people have about formal and traditional healthcare? Do they understand it? What information about healthcare services is provided to individuals? How would changing this affect their level of trust?
- ▶ **Barriers to citizen's trust in government:** How did the programme support citizens to regain trust in government systems?
- ▶ **Breakdowns of trust:** Have you ever not trusted a government official? How did trust break down?
- ▶ **Creation of trust:** officials, institutions or actions by government that have really helped build trust.
- ▶ **Family and economic situation:** Where and how they live, how many children/dependents, and how they currently earn a living.
- ▶ **Cultural identity:** How do they define their own identity? How do people from their community get along with the government? Do they trust the government? If not, why not? If so, why?

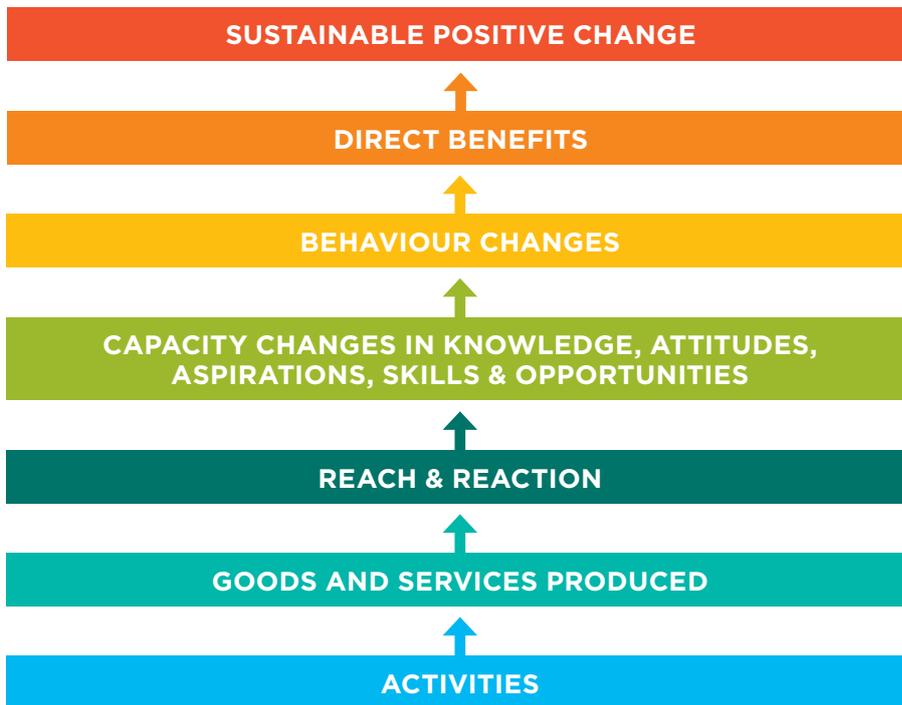
Although each interviewee's role in the health sector was different and their perspectives unique, their responses centred around the following themes that we have grouped under the key components of trust below.



ANNEX B

Useful Theory of Change

Useful Theories of Change (UToCs) are an increasingly popular model in the international development space. Patricia Rodgers identified in her seminal 2008 paper that development initiatives are increasingly recognising that they are operating in highly complex contexts, and that traditional approaches (such as output-outcome theories of change) are failing to equip projects with the tools they need to navigate these contexts.³⁴



A model of a 'Useful Theory of Change'.

The Useful Theories of Change model³⁵ performs several functions:

1. Articulate the stages that lead to change, thereby providing programmes with an actual theory of change;
2. Allow for assumptions to be identified at every level to support programmes to understand the degree of causal risk inherent in their intervention;
3. Support better monitoring, evaluation, and Learning (MEL) through having better articulation of risk and theory;
4. Support identification of change that a programme has contributed to (the common situation for complex situations) as opposed to attributable change;
5. Incorporate behaviour change explicitly, as it is a common stumbling block for programmes;
6. Allow programmes to nest theories of change.

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5. People-centred governance means that all government services (i.e. justice systems, waste management, tax collection, land titling, etc) and processes (i.e. voting, townhalls, permits to protest, etc) are designed to most efficiently and effectively solve the real and experienced problems facing citizens.
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33. The MECE (Mutually Exclusive Collectively Exhaustive) principle suggests that to understand and fix any large problem, you need to understand your options by sorting them into categories that are: “mutually exclusive”, i.e. items can only fit into one category at a time, and “collectively exhaustive”, all items can fit into one of the categories. More information about the MECE framework can be found here: <https://www.caseinterview.com/mece#:~:text=The%20MECE%20principle%20suggests%20that,into%20one%20of%20the%20categories.>
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