

Challenges of designing evaluative research in an ‘open architecture’ development initiative: Twaweza East Africa

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Introduction

Twaweza, meaning “we can make it happen” in Swahili, is a citizen-centred initiative that aims to *trigger* large scale social change in Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda. The initiative is founded on the belief that lasting change requires bottom-up action. To foster bottom-up action Twaweza aims to expand access to information and flows of information for at least ten million people, and thereby to foster citizens’ ability to enhance their agency i.e. their ability uptake information, analyse, speak up and make change happen in basic service delivery and other areas of importance to them.

The Twaweza initiative has a ten-year time frame, with three goals (i) enhance access to and flow of information among citizens (ii) enhance ‘citizen agency’ and (iii) enable citizens to use and to improve their access to basic education, primary health care, and clean water, as well as other issues of importance to them. Enhanced citizen agency is instrumental to achieving the third objective, but is also an end in itself.

Twaweza has completed its start up phase and is currently working on the design of an independent evaluation to consider its work over the next four years (2010/11 – 2013/14). As we move to appoint researchers, we are engaging with a range of challenges. These concern Twaweza’s ‘open architecture’ which works with the ideas of nudging and triggering very broad and diffuse change in society, in open-ended ways, rather than interventions designed according to pre-defined outputs. We do aim for clear effects and outcomes over a five to ten-year period. However, because of its cumulative, cross-location, cross-intervention character, effects need to be sought in society as a whole, rather than in specific target groups or locations. Clearly, this approach poses major challenges for evaluation design. This paper, which is derived from our Evaluation Concept Note, provides some background to Twaweza and its approach, presents our research questions and related hypotheses, and raises questions we think our programme design poses.

Background to Twaweza

Twaweza’s goals are to enable millions of people across East Africa to:

- Better access and generate information primarily through five nationwide channels and networks: mobile telephony, mass media, teachers, religious organizations and consumer goods networks.
- Increase agency through information access and flows which foster people’s imagination and enhance their ability to monitor, to express themselves, and initiate and co-ordinate actions. This in turn helps to:
- Improve access to basic services following enhanced scrutiny of public actors and actions by citizens themselves.

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Twaweza views each of these three goals as complex social processes which are closely related to context and institutional responses. Wherever possible, Twaweza will work to identify what groups and individuals are already doing in these three areas, and to build on them. These three steps in this conceptual framework for change are not necessarily linear, nor are the links between them necessarily causal. They are iterative, synergistic and dependent on frequent feedback loops at small (local) and at large (regional/provincial and national) scales.

Efforts are focused on three sectors: water, primary health and basic education because these areas were found to be important to people in our situation analysis and where increased citizen agency could make a difference. In water, we are concerned about access to clean water, of adequate quantity, within reasonable distance and cost, and reducing overall water insecurity and vulnerability to water-borne illness. A particular concern here is the functionality of installed water facilities. In health, our concern is access to medical supplies and health care, including the availability of trained and motivated health workers. We will also pay attention to basic immunization access so essential to public health. In education, in light of recent dramatic expansion of enrolments, our concern is with money reaching schools, teachers showing-up and teaching, and children learning, starting with basic competencies in literacy and numeracy. We have developed impact measures and tentative indicators for each goal (Appendix 1) but these will be refined once we have completed our baseline studies.

To increase access to and flows of information with the aim of triggering agency related to these sectors, Twaweza's strategy is to work with ('piggyback' on) primarily five key nationwide networks and channels synergistically such that citizens can receive, search for, find and generate information using different social networks, technologies and modes of communication: for example, from their imam, through a message in a laundry detergent box, and through SMS or radio; while at the same time using mobile phones to send data, calling in to the radio about this issue, or organizing among teachers to co-ordinate a response.

Twaweza has a dedicated unit responsible for monitoring and learning, and managing the evaluation. The external evaluation is expected to contribute to global knowledge about the relation between information, agency and change, as well as to internal learning and program development at Twaweza. In terms of the well-known formulation around 'triple loop learning' (Argyris and Schon, 1996), the external evaluation contributes to the second and third loops. The first loop involves Twaweza's own internal monitoring, which will track implementation and check outputs. The second loop involves checking our work against our research questions, hypotheses and assumptions, to enable adaptive management and course adjustments. Doing this will require interaction between the internal unit and the external evaluators. The third loop involves synthesizing the multiple lines of evidence in order to assess changes and effects in society broadly and review the appropriateness of Twaweza's conceptual framework for change.

Twaweza's approach

To achieve the synergistic effect for which it aims, Twaweza engages with anchor partners that develop 'trigger' initiatives. These mainly centre on access to, and flows of, information, as well as the ways in which expressions of agency and actions taken by ordinary people are represented through public media, channels and networks.

Twaweza will work to ensure that the following start to circulate widely in the ecosystem, through the work of our partnerships and initiatives and through framework agreements that we are setting up with each of the five channels and networks across the three countries.

- *Practical information about rights, laws, entitlements:* This basic information is not yet made available to people in accessible, popular forms across East Africa. Often when it is, it is static, inert and authoritarian. It does not capture imagination and does not lend itself to 'uptake'.
- *Comparisons:* Information presented in ways that allows people to compare their situations with others' can enable people to transcend the local. In societies with highly developed information ecologies people are constantly exposed to comparative information, often in visual forms. In Tanzania, for example, being able to compare a change in exam pass rates in your village with a change in pass rates in the neighboring village can act as a spur for action.
- *Stories of ordinary people taking initiative, making a difference:* We know that people are doing things to improve their lives, individually and collectively. But these stories are not well-documented and re-presented back to people. We know that people in poor and remote areas tell stories and have their own modes of representation. It is important to understand these, but in a globalizing world driven by knowledge and information, a wide range of forms of representation need to circulate through the communication ecology. We believe it is important to enable people themselves to identify and to re-present inspiring stories, and to establish channels whereby people can circulate their own stories.
- *Choices and pathways:* When people are informed, when they can compare their situation with others' and when they hear inspiring stories, they may feel that more options are open to them. Having examples of these options may be helpful, if imagination is to be triggered. The above three approaches can all help with envisioning choices and fostering aspirations.

Twaweza sees agency as having four aspects. Each of these is about making meaning in informed ways through different communicative and interpretive resources and each is related to the idea of 'uptake' of information.

- *Coming to know/understand:* Here we are concerned with the way in which information turns into knowledge for meaning making. If information is to become knowledge, people must do the work: they must be able to compare, contrast, connect and converse if this transformation is to take place (Davenport and Prusak, 1998). Clearly this work is context-specific, domain-specific and contingent. One way to manage this specificity is to try to ensure that people have the ability to get the information they need in an affordable, reliable manner, where/when they want it. This is where our five networks and channels need to come in. Rather than providing information in repositories, we broker information through these networks and channels, linking content makers and vehicles with wide and differentiated access, piggybacking on elements that are already part of and valued within people's existing social practices, rather than something separate to be deployed later.
- *Being able to monitor:* There are four aspects to being able to monitor. First, monitoring is important in relation to policies, budgets, laws and entitlements. Second, it is important to monitor one's situation in relation to others'. Third, monitoring can help people to compare the present with the past. Fourth, monitoring can enable perspectives to be shared and compared. Monitoring in the world of development has become reified, turned into events that are mediated through scorecards and other techniques. When we talk about citizen monitoring, we

are talking about a simpler, day to day form of monitoring, initially based on noticing differences, on keeping track in one's mind, and on sharing this process of keeping track. It's about finding whatever means are available to compare and contrast.

- *Expressing/voicing/communicating*: The concept of voice needs unpacking, as it lies at the heart of much of Twaweza's work. Voice can be defined as the ability to participate in decision-influencing or making, through having the communicative and discursive resources to make oneself understood. Communicative resources include access to channels for communicating and being able to use modes of communication (like verbal and written language, visual and gestural forms of communication) appropriately. Discursive resources include knowing about the subject matter, including cultural codes and norms, as well as information.
- *Taking action, making a difference*: Monitoring and expressing are obviously actions. By 'making a difference', we mean more than monitoring and expressing. We mean an effort to co-ordinate a sequence of actions using various tools and resources (even at the smallest scale) across time and space to achieve a particular purpose, which involves a change from the current situation. We think about this at both the individual and the collective level, in private and public domains. Much of what we hope to trigger are in domains most citizens can or already control, in the everyday aspects of their lives. These may include dealing with absent teachers or health workers, exerting pressure on those who divert medicines or water or other resources in a manner that hurts the community, organizing cleaning up the street of trash or stagnant pools that cause malaria and so forth. At times, solving a problem will require more directly holding (local) government to account.

The trigger initiatives amongst our anchor partners are based on these four key components of information and agency respectively. As they take shape, Twaweza then brokers and supports wider partnerships amongst diverse groups and actors in the three sectors, including enabling information and stories about agency to circulate through the five channels and networks through large multi-year framework agreements. This 'jumping of scale' should then catalyse further action and amplify voice across locations, sectors and scales. The density of information flows via the five channels and the 'buzz' created as this spreads across the three sectors is expected to create an 'ecosystem effect' in which change can be brought about by citizens themselves, in ways that are not linear and predictable, and which will vary from context to context. Our 'interventions', if they can be termed thus, are not single and well-defined. They are by nature, cumulative, reinforcing and consist of interactions created through 'crossings' of locations, scales and types of interventions. Spill-over effects are seen as part of the design. The evaluation needs to focus, not on the interventions themselves, but on the effects created through spill-over and interaction within these crossings.

An example of a strategic partnership can be seen in the work we are doing in the education sector. Our anchor partner here is called Uwezo (www.uwezo.net), which is an umbrella structure for three organisations working across Tanzania, Kenya and Uganda. Uwezo aims, in the long term, to improve children's literacy and numeracy learning and to shift the discourse across East Africa towards quality of learning, amongst millions of ordinary family members who are concerned about their children's schooling. Uwezo's trigger initiative is a simple literacy and numeracy test (Based on the ASER approach in India, see www.asercentre.org), which is undertaken at a very large scale on an annual basis, and which happens inside the household, rather than in the school. Feedback is given to families immediately, and informal monitoring that we have done indicates that families are taking up the issues themselves and finding ways of challenging the shocking state of their children's learning.

With 100 days' turnaround time, the data is processed and reports are produced. These take various forms and they are presented at district, regional and national levels. The report is launched in a manner designed to generate maximum media publicity, and conscious efforts are made to trigger radio talk shows, op-ed pieces, and other media activities. The key findings are then brokered into the work of our other partners, like the comic book called Shujaaz, and the TV series called Daladala TV (where ordinary people discuss day-to-day issues while driving to their destinations in a little bus fitted out like a TV studio). Uwezo itself, and programmes like Shujaaz and Daladala TV then elicit text messages from people about these issues and these then feed into a further round of programming. We are now going to send the test out at scale through consumer goods distribution networks, so, for example, it will go out to villages in boxes of pens that are sold in local shops and that go to schools, and through all 128 district branches of the Tanzania Teachers' Union. A competition will be advertised that will ask people to tell stories about what they are doing to support their children's learning. And at the same time Uwezo is collecting further data through sms from families in villages whose children were tested, and to assess the types of action parents may be taking to support their children's learning. These stories are then collected, and we hope filmed and, are again shown on the various spaces that we have negotiated with the five channels and networks. This is all happening across the three countries and the test is undertaken every year, so each year the effects should be multiplicative. Other interventions will be developed in an iterative manner, as new opportunities arise, partners come forth to express interest in joining, and lessons are learned about what works well and what doesn't from what has already been tried, including political pushback from the Government.

Further examples of strategic partnerships are taking shape in the water sector through our anchor partner in Tanzania, Daraja (www.daraja.org); and are due to take shape in 2011 in the health sector. Each of these exists, or will be set up, with variations, in each of the three countries.

Uwazi, also known as the Infoshop, is a further initiative of Twaweza's. Uwazi's brief is to monitor progress in relation to policies, analyse data and produce accessible representations of this data for wider use. In support of the water partnership, for example, Uwazi is running a high frequency mobile phone survey of experiences of service delivery. Various ways of representing the information will be experimented and broadcast through our partners and the five networks and channels, as well as through Uwazi's own methods. Uwazi has also conducted further analysis of Uwezo data and published briefs on the same, as well as produced briefings on water supply, done monitoring of the costs and effectiveness of regulation of the costs of water sold at public water points.

As can be seen in our design, Twaweza's role is therefore that of broker of relationships and synergies, that are often somewhat unorthodox. We do not take the ordered approach that has characterized so much work in development, which sees targeted inputs *controlled by the development project* as leading to pre-specified outputs, in linear and somewhat mechanical fashion, which can be tested as single variables, controlled for difference, and where the magnitude of the input is correlated with the size of the change. Instead, our stance draws on ideas about connectivity and complexity. We have seen that a large push to the system may not move it at all. We therefore aim to identify 'attractors' as we are working, and build on them, study what happens, notice the feedback and adapt. Attractors can be examples of activities that people and organizations have undertaken to make a difference, that they care about, that are working and that others want to emulate.

Twaweza is therefore grappling with an "open architecture" concept and this has implications for the design of the evaluation.

The 'ecosystem of change' exists in a wider communication ecology. Ecosystems and ecology are metaphors for the interconnectedness of people, resources, structures and institutions, and the networks, niches, flows and pathways of information and communication. At present these represent the interests of particular groups and elites. We believe that they can potentially be shifted, and we see this happening in large parts of the world where people are engaging through digital technologies in new forms of monitoring, co-ordination and social action. In East Africa we believe that such a shift may involve "altering the terms of recognition" (Appadurai, 2004), or the terms under which "the poor negotiate with the very norms that frame their social lives" (p66).

So, as the work unfolds we aim to observe, reflect and evaluate keenly. How does agency get triggered or constrained, and manifest itself? How can we document manifestations of voice and how these actions and initiatives are represented, both through the work we do with the existing media and in the new channels and circuits of communication that will start to form in the wider ecosystem of change? What do we learn about the links between information access, imagination, agency and access to better services? What does it take to cause a shift in the wider information/media ecology across the region?

Evaluation goals, questions and hypotheses

In addition to drawing on the evaluation findings as it proceeds, Twaweza looks to the evaluation to assess changes in society and effects from the first five years of its work and to inform the development of its second phase (2014 – 2018). Specifically, the evaluation needs to:

- Assess change and effects amongst citizens in general and across East Africa in the areas of information, citizen agency and service delivery;
- Explain the links between information, agency and service delivery;
- Relate these changes and effects, as well as these links, to the extent possible to Twaweza's strategies and activities.

Below we present the key questions, and discuss each as we work towards shaping up our key hypotheses together with our evaluators.

1. How should Twaweza understand information and agency?

With regard to information: We see information as potentially valuable in increasing awareness, shaping understandings and reducing uncertainty. Information flows between people, and spreads between individuals and groups: it is relational and its pathways and flows are multi-directional and thus unpredictable. Because it is relational, it is communication dependent. This implies that the resources and technologies (for example, mobile phones/language/literacy) for communicating and interpreting information are inseparable from the content that it carries. The concept of communication ecologies captures our understanding of these ideas. Nudges or triggers to the communication ecology can affect how knowledge is represented, acquires meaning and circulates, and potentially engender its amplification over time and space.

But the concept of access to information can equate with the vaccination idea in modernization theories, which prescribes injections of information for the 'information-poor'. People are not blank slates on which information can write its purposes and cause 'behavior change'. Information needs to be brokered into people's existing social practices in the different spheres and domains of their lives. Social practices are shaped by the capabilities and assets to which people have access, and the structural

constraints they experience. We need to understand these and, where possible, make them the starting point.

It is important therefore that information is not conceptualized as a one-way flow from those that have it to those that don't. A top-down, one-way flow of information does not sit easily with the ecosystem concept. For this reason we don't just talk about access to information, we also talk about generating and brokering information, creating new circuits for information, redundancy and feedback loops. The advent of digital technologies, the mobile phone in particular, enables 'many to many' forms of communication and enables ordinary citizens to generate their own information. Digital information is no longer sole-authored and involves (particularly amongst youth) creative remixing using language, sound, image, music. Its makers are often mobile themselves and the information they generate is itself mobile, as it is re-contextualized across space and time. We aim to harness these new ways of making meaning. In addition, these trends have implications for the blurring of the boundaries between research and program work, for example, real-time monitoring by citizens through mobile phones can be part of program work at the same time as it provides research data. This poses "Hawthorne effect" types of questions for the independence of our evaluation.

With regard to agency: It appears that agency is best understood as multidimensional – in terms of levels (individual/collective), domains (health, education, water, religion etc.) and spheres (public/private). Agency typically accumulates in one domain, rather than globally and then may spill over into other domains, but the pathways underlying how it develops, how it is influenced by and influences information uptake, and how it translates into action are complex, non-linear and interactive.

Hypotheses here would need to test the scales and domains in which agency can be identified and the role of proximity vs. distance in the exercise of agency.

2. To what extent are citizens able to better access and communicate information in Tanzania, Uganda and Kenya particularly in relation to the five channels?

Our approach suggests a hypothesis that people will be more likely to process, recall and use information when it is presented through the experience of people like themselves and steps they have taken, and in the representation of their own experience, rather than in the abstract language of facts, policies or rights. In addition, we argue that people's agency will increase if they are able to search for, engage with, generate themselves and use information proactively rather than when they are its passive recipients.

Here we would be testing whether the active use of information allows citizens to 'own it' which in turn enhances agency, something that would not happen if information is received passively. A challenge with this hypothesis is that processing information is already an expression of agency. Hence, everything else being equal, active processing of information always leads to more agency than passive processing of agency. As there is no clear scale on which agency is measured, it is unclear how the increase in agency as a result of actively using information could be separated from the already heightened level of agency due to information processing.

3. To what extent do expanded access to and flows of information lead to enhanced citizen agency? How does this dynamic work and how might it be constrained?

Information can increase agency by expanding people's frames of reference in terms of what they might do and how. As agency increases, people may identify more with people that have taken steps to bring about change, potentially on a larger physical scale, and who may have sought more complex types of

change. It is possible that information that helps to identify those sharing similar concerns is more likely to prompt collective agency and group action.

In the longer term, it is likely that agency and access to information are correlated, but in the shorter term, the relationship may not be linear and this poses challenges for monitoring and adaptation. People may exhibit adaptive preferences such that at lower levels of information, they display relatively high agency and as awareness of their circumstances grows, or their frames of reference change, their perceived agency might fall. For example, as information uptake increases, people may become more cognizant of structural constraints shaping their circumstances. This may decrease their agency, all else equal, in the short term. In addition, constraints in the form of action by governments, formal or information institutions and in the form of tacit or overt social norms may prevent people from using information to bring about change.

4. To what extent and in what ways do expanded access to information and communication and enhanced citizen agency contribute to improved citizen access to basic service delivery (either because citizens take more actions themselves, or because they hold public service providers to account)?

We argue that information will have the greatest impact when provided through a large number of channels and frequently, such that it has a cumulative impact. We hypothesize that when the supply of information reaches a ‘tipping point’, it will trigger activity in an exponential fashion. We suggest that information can prompt shifts in community norms and expectations, leading people to take action individually and collectively.

In our argument, as agency increases, people will be more able to make changes in their immediate lives and in their community by taking action themselves and/or by holding policy makers accountable. It is likely that group action is more likely to occur where there is greater social cohesion.

As agency increases, people should be more able to engage in vertical as well as horizontal forms of action, the physical scale over which they feel able to take action should increase, they should be more willing to undertake more complex types of action.

Despite context specificity, we can identify, at a general level, resources, social practices and constraints likely to underlie the development and expression of agency and the types of coordination that in turn predict different types of actions.

We therefore see agency as important in itself, as an outcome in and of itself, not only as a means to improving service delivery. While we recognize them as important, we do not see ourselves as working directly to foster reform processes or institutional change. There are many actors working on these issues. Rather we see our niche or core work as triggering the public pressure that can help animate ongoing institutional reforms, by creating greater awareness, public debate and citizen engagement about the purpose and value of public sector for people, and in so doing help citizens reclaim the public sector as belonging to them rather than an alien government ‘out there’.

5. To what extent does taking action contribute to citizen’s agency and to their engagement with information?

We think that action can increase people’s propensity to seek out information and vice versa, in a dynamic process. Involvement in some form of action is likely to bolster one’s perceived ability to take other types of action, in a path-dependent process. Action can increase through a ‘nudge’ or peer effect

such that people witness the actions of others and decide to take actions themselves. Such action may be either spatially concentrated or stretched over space through the uses of communications technologies.

6. How did Twaweza contribute to enhancing citizen agency and outcomes in public service delivery and other aspects of their lives?

Our work is premised on the idea that the five channels and networks that Twaweza has identified are main sources of information for many people. There are clearly others, and we will need to explore these too. We do argue that an increased volume of information and of means of information sharing can provide a platform for people to share their lived experience, and thereby to amplify possibilities to bring about change.

Within our typology of four forms of key manifestations of agency, including uptake, expression, monitoring and action, it is possible that the four may be related sequentially and have distinct information demands.

By providing triggers or nudges to the generation of information and the platforms underlying its circulation, Twaweza can prompt its amplification, with implications for agency and its expression.

An increase in information surrounding health, education and water delivery will increase people's belief they can improve service delivery, their knowledge of possible pathways to change, and concrete actions aimed at doing so.

Evaluation approach

Hypotheses suggest research methods which provide answers to "what works?" types of questions. Twaweza also needs to answer questions about "why/how/under what conditions" do its interventions work (or not work). The research design needs to deal with both kinds of questions and should comprise innovative qualitative and quantitative research, as well as combinations/linkages between the two.

On the quantitative side it is expected that baseline (2010) and follow-up (2014) household, community and facility surveys will be undertaken. Draft surveys have been developed. In addition, in one of Twaweza's programs called the 'wananchi (citizen) survey', households covered in the baseline survey (2,500 hhs/country) will each be provided with a mobile phone, which will be used to ask 10-12 questions weekly through a mobile survey. The objective of this mobile survey is monitoring of service delivery and opinion-polling, yet it provides the evaluator with an opportunity to gather real-time, high frequency information on areas of interest to the evaluation. The mobile phones can possibly also be used for in-depth interviews using voice.

On the qualitative side, it is expected that research studies will aim at explaining the links in the theory of change i.e. the relation between information access and flow and increased agency, and the relation between increased agency and improved service delivery. If they are to answer questions about why/how/under what conditions change occurs (or does not), they will need to address issues of power and culture. It is expected that there will be a range of types of studies, and where possible, synergies between these and the surveys and other quantitative studies.

Some qualitative studies can address specific aspects of the hypotheses. But in order to understand the relation between information access/flows and agency the following focus areas have been suggested: existing communicative ecologies at different scales; communicative practices and resources at local

levels; forms of uptake of information; and necessity of information for an increased sense of agency and action. Descriptions of existing conditions in these focus areas could then facilitate holistic and contextualized studies, which map change and assess Twaweza's contributions over its first five years. Some studies may therefore need to be site-based and involve ethnographies of communicative practices in villages or urban communities; others may be group-based and focus on how the affordances of particular modes of communication where Twaweza anticipates significant change (users of Facebook) enable or constrain the uptake of information and the exercise of agency; still others could include content and discourse analysis of existing forms of documentation (minutes of village water committees). In many of these cases, longitudinal or comparative studies would be useful. A different type of approach could involve event tracking, in order to map the uptake of information and the social relations in sequences of actions undertaken by citizens (both every day, mundane actions like cleaning up a street, as well as unusual or spectacular actions like forcing the President's motorcade to stop and force him to hear community concerns). Each of these could be considered in relation to social network analyses.

It is most likely that Twaweza will opt for an evaluation design that draws together a loose consortium of research teams with different areas of expertise, interest and focus. The work of these teams will then be co-ordinated by an in-house evaluation manager who is immersed in Twaweza's work and can constantly respond to events on the ground and feed these back to the research teams. Interaction between the teams will be encouraged, and efforts will be made to pull together information into a whole narrative that is more instructive than simply the sum of its parts.

Challenges in evaluation design

Certain features of Twaweza's theory of change and its program of work pose challenges for evaluation.

First, our approach and our program cannot necessarily be adapted or modified in order to facilitate ease of evaluation. Much of our work is designed for seamless integration into the logic of everyday life, the ongoing quotidian events and practices of those already working within and reached by the five networks and channels (religion; journalists, broadcasters and programmers in radio, TV and print media; commercial goods distributors; teachers; mobile phone vendors/marketers), and *according to logics, timeframes and scales that make sense to them*. Because 'our' success is so dependent on partners viewing the interventions as their own, 'interventions' cannot be designed in a manner that artificially constrains partner priorities and rhythms.

Second, a key criterion for Twaweza is to work with multiple partners on multiple aspects at scale at the same time, so as to create synergistic effects and density of information flows, often by piggybacking onto broad reach that they already have (e.g. improving news content on national radio, engaging the church's parishes in all districts of the country). We also encourage the 'interventions' to take a 'life of their own', where partners may at first do what we have jointly negotiated but then evolve and implement the work in ways that were not anticipated. Therefore there are no well defined 'intervention' sites or comparison sites as such, other than the variability in the depth of reach or possibly the timing of activities of the different partners. This provides challenges in identifying counterfactuals.

Third, the identification strategy is hampered by issues of endogeneity as the direction of causality between the three steps in the theory of change from information access → citizen action/agency → improved service delivery can easily be reversed, for instance when the (expectation) of successful action leading to improved service delivery leads to information access.

Fourth, it may well be that the impact of the information strategy and the eco-system idea is non-linear and exponential to the extent that it may be hard to discern any impact till a certain 'tipping point' has been reached.

Fifth, randomized experiments may be possible where they naturally fit into planned Twaweza activities and/or make use of natural experiments. This also helps ensure that the experiment reflects a real (scalable) situation and not an artificially created environment i.e. put bluntly, the intervention logic or scale will not be modified to fit the needs of the randomized experiment; the randomized experiment would need to fit the logic of the intervention.

Questions for consideration

Twaweza's open architecture, the scale at which it works, its responsiveness and its 'piggy-backing on' and 'nudging of' existing practices suggests to us that we are not so much looking for an evaluation that narrowly uncovers causal relations between pre-defined constructs according to pre-defined indicators, but rather open-ended research that rigorously studies broad changes and effects in society and then seeks to trace these back to assess Twaweza's contribution.

We (Twaweza) say that we are building on what people are already doing, and on what networks and channels they already use to communicate, but how can our evaluation tell us whether our constructs of information, agency, action, accountability are valid within the mind-sets of the millions of ordinary people with whom we hope to engage?

What approaches are best for answering questions which are not limited to single well-defined interventions, but which focus on higher-level interactions between multiple interventions, across locations and scales? This implies that it is our ability to foster 'eco-system effects' that needs researching, not so much the detail of our and our partners' interventions.

If we do opt for an 'open architecture' evaluative research approach, involving three to four different research teams, could we fail to get an overall synthesis of findings, and miss the opportunity for rigorous evaluation?

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Appendix 1: Metrics Framework 2010 – 2018

While Twaweza is fully committed to the extent and reach of impact suggested in the indicators below, many of these are seen as placeholders, which will need to be fully developed through the literature review, secondary data analyses and baseline studies.

Goal	Impact measures	Possible indicators (measurable and can be disaggregated in terms of youth, men and women)
ONE: Enhance access to and generating of information	Citizens have increased access to information via five channels	40% of young people, men and women in 75% of districts have increased access to information
	Improved quality/content of information	Indicators to be developed
	Strengthened independence, plurality, quality and reach of mass media (print, TV and radio)	Indicators to be developed
	Increased options for citizens to generate and interpret data and information	Indicators to be developed
TWO: Enhance citizen agency (capability and action) (by 2013 and continuing)	Citizens exercising voice	20% of young people, men and women in 75% of districts have increased opportunities to express views in a public sphere to a public body
	Citizens monitoring services and government	10% of young people, men and women in 50% of districts have increased opportunities to express views in a public sphere to a public body
	Citizens making change happen	At least 10% of young people, men and women have an increased sense of being able to make change happen, and can cite an example of having done so in the past 12 months
THREE: Improve service delivery (by 2018, tracking progress in the meantime)	Improvements in basic education outcomes	85% of teachers show up and teach 90% of disbursed funds for schools reach them 80% of children able to read and write at their level
	Improvements in basic health outcomes	85% of health workers show up and deliver health care 90% of basic medicines available at clinics 85% DPTb3 immunization coverage X% experience better health
	Improvements in access to and affordability of water	90% urban and 70% rural have access to piped or covered water within 30minutes fetch time X% reduction in water insecurity Y% reduction in water borne illness
	Other changes (made by citizens' self-determined priorities)	Methods to be developed to capture areas chosen by citizens themselves