

# **INDEPENDENT REVIEW REPORT**

**DFID STAR-Ghana Programme;  
Phases I and II**



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## Executive Summary

STAR-Ghana has had two phases, the first phase (2010- 2015) and the current STAR-Ghana Phase II (2015-2020). The current phase is a £23.13 million multi-donor civil society support programme consisting of funds from DFID, the Danish Development Cooperation (DANIDA)<sup>1</sup> and the European Union. The STAR Ghana programmes built on a number of related programmes that were implemented in the past including the *Ghana Research and Advocacy Programme* (G-RAP) (2005-2011); *Kasa* (2008-2010); the *Rights and Voice Initiative* (RAVI) (2004-2010); and the *Civil Society Governance Fund* (CSGF) (2004-2010). The Second Phase of STAR Ghana (2015-2020), which we in this report refer to in short as STAR 2 has a focus on:

- Catalysing the efforts of citizens towards systematic change on specific issues through its 3CLs strategy – Convene, Catalyse, Coordinate and Learn; and
- Working towards the creation of a Ghanaian run corporate body to sustain support beyond the programme.

The anticipated outcome of the STAR Programme ‘is increased effectiveness of citizen influencing change that advances democracy and social inclusion by enhancing the capacities of civil society organisations and strategic state partners to address salient issues at the national and sub-national levels’. STAR 2 was designed to seamlessly dovetail into the emergence of the STAR Ghana Foundation. The Foundation, as Ghanaian owned organisation, is in turn expected to sustain the role of being a “centre for active citizenship, civil society and philanthropy” having anchored itself on the established Unique Selling Points (USP) of STAR Ghana.

The *Independent Review* part of the assignment, which this report is about, was meant to assess the changes achieved by STAR-Ghana programme to date including: how these changes were brought about; identify the adaptations that STAR-Ghana has gone through and demonstrate the extent to which this adaptive journey has led to greater results; and understand and demonstrate how the different components of STAR-Ghana (clusters, Community of Practices, etc) complement and reinforce each other to achieve greater results

The implementation of the STAR programme produced flagship projects in the sense of achieving well recognized outcomes and impacts, including: ‘Elections (promoting peaceful, credible and issue-based, and inclusive elections), Gender Equality and social inclusion (advancing gender equality and social inclusion through citizen engagement and collective action), media (effectiveness of media action and partnerships with civil society for accountable, responsive and inclusive governance), anticorruption (fighting corruption effectively through citizen, community, and civil society), and Local Governance (inclusive governance and citizenship at the local level). Ultimately, there were significant improvements in policy and practice, addressing vulnerability, improving services, engagement of citizens in local governance; and tackling corruption. However, more needs to happen in aggregating the local successes into a force for change as in joining the dots for synergy at both the local and

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<sup>1</sup> DANIDA ceased its development funding to Ghana end of 2018 and therefore its support to STAR Ghana also ended at the end of 2018.

national levels. The STAR Ghana Foundation would do well to harness these local energies as in successes as an asset for facilitating engagements at the national level in future.

As regards inclusion, the evidence is instructive in showing that it is now possible to see CSO partners that are embracing inclusion in their programming, going beyond numbers of particular vulnerable group categories, such as number of people living with disability accessing the 3% of the District Assembly budget allocated to the Disability Common Fund. It is our view that this is where the embedded PEA would have added significant value in terms of helping to unpack the cultural, societal, political and economic factors that inform gender and social inclusion. During the time of the review, STAR Ghana was in the process of conducting Six pilots at grantee level. It is hoped that these pilots will demonstrate how other Grant Partners can embed PEA in their interventions.

As regards approaches, the programme used a wide range of new and innovative approaches, including clustering, the 3Cs and L, Communities of Practice, and different approaches to leveraging partners to engage with duty bearers, including through innovative granting. However, despite individual successes within each approach, these approaches could have been used more effectively together by anchoring them on different parts of the pathways on the STAR Ghana theory of change. A mapping exercise would show for example which parts of the ToC clustering is most useful for. In the revised 3Cs and L ToC for instance, clustering might enhance learning and collaboration, and then in bringing actors that are working together around a common issue, can catalyse change more than convenings. Convenings appear to be more useful at the start and when looking to define the nature of an issue. The Communities of Practice on the other hand should emerge organically among members that are finding area of work that they want to continue developing together. They can then deepen their practice as well as share their work in their own ecosystems.

Our findings discussed in this report show three main Unique Selling Points that have been incrementally built up as part of the STAR-Ghana track record. These include:

- a) An honest broker of relationships among actors within civil society, with the media and the government
- b) A unique approach to supporting civil society within the ecosystem through the 3Cs and L at a big scale, which is clearly not a niche for other organisations
- c) A capable grant making body

#### *Key recommendations for the Programme*

- a) STAR Ghana should develop a clear strategy for harnessing and aggregating successes at the individual organisation or theme level as a solid evidence for engaging government and other actors from local to national level.
- b) The issue selection process should concentrate on finding issues within issues through a lot more work being spent on drilling down on the first expression of issues and ultimately to the route systemic issues that are often hidden or otherwise pop up in different dimensions during implementation of projects. The argument is that unless there is a disciplined and PEA informed process of issue identification using the 3Cs and L, and embedded PEA, there will be attempts at tackling topical issues but not addressing the root causes of poor governance.

- c) The programme should think carefully about the relationship among the 3Cs and L, in theory of change terms so that the Convening, Coordination and Learning roles should be seen as strategies for Catalysing action. They are not all at the same level, as practice seems to show.
- d) The interviews emerged with the thinking that the reason convenings are often one off and not systematically followed through in terms of some of the emerging issues through several iterations of convenings around them is that the programme is grants heavy, and hence delivering the programme takes away time needed to embed the 3Cs and L approach among the staff as well as GPs. The Programme should rebalance time spent on providing grants and time spent deepening the 3C's and L
- e) Competitive funding is used to encourage applicants to deliver safe, lower-risk projects where results can be better assured. However, their short-term nature makes these grants not as suitable for established organisations such as IDEG, Send Ghana, and CDD. Organisations of this size instead prefer more longer term 'core funding' type support so they can work on their issues with necessary flexibility, focusing on results. In general terms as well, GPs often complained of the short-term nature of grants that does not give them enough time to try out most of what they learn through STAR support.
- f) The two forms of PEA, the general and thematic, worked at the national level should be linked to what is being learnt from the partner level embedded PEAs. The partner embedded PEAs should use more qualitative approaches such as Outcome Mapping and Outcomes Harvesting to track the changes in key actor behaviours. Three tools are recommended to be used concurrently, Alignment Interest Influence Mapping (AIIM), Outcome Mapping and Outcomes Harvesting. It is these tools, which when combined with the Log-Frame indicators can give a picture of the changes that are occurring with what context.
- g) In terms of the STAR Ghana theory of change and in view of the emerging SGF, the programme needs to use its proven CONVENING power, along with learning and collaboration/ coordination roles to catalyse change. In other words, work much more in improving the quality of convenings as a niche area for change (cf. recommendation C)
- h) The national environment of Ghana as a middle-income country makes fundraising within the NGO circles difficult. The concept of Ghana beyond aid has compounded the situation as most donors now think Ghana can do it on her own and are cutting their funding levels. Attracting private sector support is a bit challenging because engagement of professional bodies which Star Ghana wanted to stimulate under Star 1 did not go far. The SGF needs to develop a strategy for engaging with the Private Sector for both fundraising and as an active partner for change.
- i) The different approaches that STAR Ghana is using (PEA, Clustering, Communities of Practice etc) can be used more strategically together in different combinations by locating them on different parts of the pathways on the STAR Ghana Theory of Change so that they are tested for effectiveness in terms of enhancing these pathways. This will also clarify their logical relationships.

## ***Recommendations for DFID***

### ***Support the STAR Ghana Foundation to effectively build on the Accountable Grant***

- j) A recurring feedback we got from stakeholders during key informant interviews about donor funded programmes was their lack of continuity when it mattered most. They cited work around corruption, G-RAP as some of such programmes which had gained momentum but ended abruptly due to changes in donor priorities and withdrawal of funding. DFID should encourage the SGF to use part of the £2.25 accountable grant to continue some of the work started under the programme by grant partners that have shown great progress.

### ***Policy Space for CSOs***

- k) The adoption of an accountable grant for supporting the Foundation will not be the same the kind of funding arrangement that DFID has had with the STAR Ghana programme, especially in terms of how DFID was indirectly also providing space for engaging government using the evidence from the programme. This space is likely to be lost at a time that Civil Society needs it the most because of the general global trend of closing civic space. Often times, donors have not distinguished the rise of a country to 'middle income status', which is often based on economic indicators and hence leading to donor withdrawals, from the nature of civic space. DFID should ensure that its support to the STAR Ghana Foundation using the accountable grant does not mean a disconnection with the Governing Council and the Foundation in terms of supporting or leveraging country engagements where necessary.

# Independent Review Report

## 1. Introduction

STAR-Ghana has had two phases, the first phase (2010- 2015) and the current STAR-Ghana Phase II (2015-2020). The current phase is a £23.13 million multi-donor civil society support programme consisting of funds from DFID, the Danish Development Cooperation (DANIDA)<sup>2</sup> and the European Union. The STAR Ghana programmes built on a number of related programmes that were implemented in the past including the **Ghana Research and Advocacy Programme** (G-RAP) (2005-2011); **Kasa** (2008-2010); the **Rights and Voice Initiative** (RAVI) (2004-2010); and the **Civil Society Governance Fund** (CSGF) (2004-2010). The rationale was that even though the previous governance programmes including STAR-Ghana Phase 1 achieved good results, there was need to increase the focus on strategic and systemic level impact, as well as provide an institutional mechanism for sustaining and achieving more beyond the second phase.

STAR 2 therefore was designed with a dual focus - catalysing the efforts of citizens towards systemic change on specific issues and, crucially, working towards the creation of a Ghanaian-run, body corporate entity to sustain support for these efforts beyond the life cycle of STAR 2<sup>3</sup>.

- Catalysing the efforts of citizens towards systematic change on specific issues through its 3CLs strategy – Convene, Catalyse, Coordinate and Learn; and
- Working towards the creation of a Ghanaian run corporate body to sustain support beyond the programme.

The anticipated outcome of the STAR Programme was “**increased effectiveness of citizen influencing change that advances democracy and social inclusion by enhancing the capacities of civil society organisations and strategic state partners to address salient issues at the national and sub-national levels**”. STAR 2 was designed to seamlessly usher in the STAR Ghana Foundation. The Foundation, as Ghanaian owned organisation, is in turn expected to sustain the role of being a “**centre for active citizenship, civil society and philanthropy**” having anchored itself on the established Unique Selling Points (USP) of the two phases of STAR Ghana

The STAR 2 programme is currently continuing with implementation as designed until September 2020. As a reflection of the seamless move towards the STAR Ghana Foundation, the PMT and the Steering Committee have already facilitated the formation of the STAR Ghana Foundation Governing Council to whom, as per the current Organogram, the STAR Ghana Foundation Acting Director now reports. The *STAR-Ghana Programme Management Team*, formed out of the consortium led by *Christian Aid* with *Social Development Direct*, *Humentum*, the *Overseas Development Institute* and *Nkum Associates*) will continue until the end of Christian Aid’s contract in October 2020.

### *Objectives and Scope of the Assignment*

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<sup>2</sup> DANIDA ceased its development funding to Ghana end of 2018 and therefore its support to STAR Ghana also ended at the end of 2018.

<sup>3</sup> See DFID Business case for STAR 2

The overall objective of this assignment is **to independently review STAR-Ghana's contribution to the emergence of a well-informed and active Ghanaian citizenry and to generate key messages that would strengthen articulation of STAR-Ghana Foundation's potential to sustain accountability and social inclusion gains and support Civil Society's efforts at promoting transformational change**. This means there are two interlinked parts to the assignment, with their own specific objectives. The two parts of the assignment and their specific objectives include:

*a) Independent Review*

- Assess the changes achieved by STAR-Ghana I and STAR-Ghana II to date including how these changes were brought about,
- Identify the adaptations that STAR-Ghana has gone through and demonstrate the extent to which this adaptive journey has led to greater results,
- Understand and demonstrate how the different components of STAR-Ghana (clusters, Community of Practices, etc) complement and reinforce each other to achieve greater results

*b) Strengthening STAR Ghana Foundation's strategic messaging and communications*

- Identify, extract and shape key messages from the Independent Review to feed into STAR Ghana Foundation's unique value proposition and external communications to strengthen its viability and marketability, attract new funding, and build its profile as a centre for active citizenship, civil society and philanthropy;
- Provide opportunities for developing engaging content on outstanding impact, achievements, stories, quotes, facts and statistics emerging from the Independent Review which can be creatively shared across STAR Ghana Foundation external channels.

These two main parts of the same assignment are also reported on differently, with the second part drawing on the first part. The first part, the Independent Review, is what this report is about while the Strategic Messaging Paper is presented in the second report so that they can be read both as standalone reports as well as taken together.

The report first provides the overall approach to the whole assignment, and then discusses the findings in three parts (contextual analysis, a critique of the theory of change, and then the direct findings in relation to the review questions) before then providing the overall conclusions and recommendations both in general and looking forward to the foundation. Wherever possible, the main recommendations are being presented in **bold** font throughout the document and then summarised at the end.



## 2. Approach and Methodology

The methodology was provided in the Terms of Reference for the assignment but was reworked to fit our own understanding of the assignment and how to best answer the questions asked which was then submitted to DFID in the form of the Inception Report. DFID as well as the Programme Director and the Head of Programmes for STAR Ghana provided their guidance both in writing as well as during the launch of the assignment on 1<sup>st</sup> July which most of the STAR Ghana staff also attended. In the end the methodology was laid out into key overlapping phases as shown in Table 1

*Table 1: Key Phases of the Methodology for the Independent Evaluation*

Step 1: Desk review A	A desk review was conducted to familiarise ourselves with the programme and the Foundation, following documents that DFID and the PMT shared.
Understanding STAR Ghana in its Context	<p>These documents included programme proposal and inception reports (STAR I and STAR II), programme logframe and ToCs, STAR 1 Programme Completion Report, End of Project Review and End of Thematic Call Review; Commissioned papers under STAR 1 and 2; ICAI Report on STAR 1; DFID Annual Reviews, learning reviews and any learning documents, grants' monitoring reports, donors reports, STAR-Ghana's transition plan. The full list is provided in Annex 2.</p> <p>We also reflected on a number of cutting edge academic/ semi academic literature on governance, empowerment and accountability in Ghana and more generally. This helped to shape the analysis, as well as answer some of the review questions robustly. Additionally, the review looked at selected key literature on contextual dynamics in Ghana, building on the seminal 2013 Political Economy Analysis of Civil Society in Ghana, commissioned by STAR Ghana – <i>Dzodzi Tsikata, Maame Gyekye-Jandoh and Martin Hushie (2013) Political Economy of Civil Society in Ghana</i></p>
Step 2: Desk Review B Deep dive read on design and project documents	<p>Concentrated on the most relevant programme documents that we received from DFID, especially programme design documents such as the theory of change, annual review reports as well as some thematic project reports. This helped our initial sampling of projects to include in the Key Informant Interviews (KIIs), which were reflected in the first draft inception report for discussion with DFID and PMT</p> <p>For DFID, this stage included a meeting with DFID Staff at the DFID Ghana offices where the main aim of the assignment was elaborated.</p>
Step 3: Key Informant Interviews (KII) / Semi-structured Interviews	KIIs for both the IR and the SMP were discussed with the PMT and DFID and they included: the donors, project's staff, Foundation's Governing Council members, Steering Committee members under STAR 1 and STAR 2, Technical Advisors and other local consultants, but also with grant partners (CSOs), including GESI groups and constituents and external stakeholders, including representatives of government, the private sector, representative from the civil society and the media. The main aspects of the logic behind the sampling process included, our understanding of the theory of change, based on the workshop conducted with STAR Ghana staff on the launch of the fieldwork at the STAR Ghana

	<p>offices, consideration of the core STAR Ghana programme themes or “flagship themes” including, elections, Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI), Media, Anti-corruption, and Local Governance.</p> <p>The first week of the fieldwork was done jointly so as to test out our instruments and art of asking the kinds of questions that we had prepared, after which we split into two teams with Dr Lambongang conducting interviews in Northern Ghana and Fletcher doing the same in the South, Takoradi to be specific. Dr Joe then used part of the second week and third week of the fieldwork to interview Key Informants in the Greater Accra.</p> <p>See Annex 3 for details of the KIIs</p>
Gap Filling	<p>To explore interesting ideas further via more evidence gathering or dialogue with relevant Key Informants</p> <p>A lot of project documents were also reviewed in order to draw out evidence of outcomes and impacts. The team used a qualitative software called <i>Nvivo</i> in order to manage the documents and analysis quicker.</p>
Most significant Change stories	<p>Explored project reports for already existing Most Significant Case studies, as per the reporting templates that Star Ghana uses, that best demonstrates STAR Ghana outcomes</p>
Presentation of findings to the PMT and DFID	<p>The emerging findings were presented to the PMT, which unlike the launch one now included the consortium members including CA and SDD. As a result, for instance, the draft strategic messages are reflected in their revised draft case for the STAR Foundation.</p> <p>This debriefing session resulted in the team identifying important gaps that needed to be filled through further interviews as well as document analysis. In terms of document analysis, consortium members ended up sending us more key programme documents such as Strategic Learning Event reports and those pertaining to the STAR Foundation. Additional time was allocated to analyse these important documents properly.</p> <p>The draft findings were then also presented to DFID, and the resulting comments, together with a wide range of other online comments (e.g. from Christian Aid and a member of the Governing Council, were studied and taken into account for the final report.</p>

The emphasis of the assignment was to use participatory methods to inform the programme’s impact to date (STAR 1 and 2). The methodology is hereby also presented graphically in order to show the overlaps and main deliverables within each step, See Annex 2.

### 3. Main Findings

#### 3.1 Major achievements by STAR Ghana I and II

The review explored the achievements of STAR Ghana through the review of reports as well as interviewing grant partners sampled from STAR 1, STAR 2 and those that worked with STAR Ghana during both phases. The findings show that whereas STAR 1 had significant achievements it is during the implementation of STAR 2 that the programme addressed some of the collective action challenges, through the 'covenings' working with civil society, media, and the state to address underlying causes of poverty and exclusion in the Ghanaian society.

Some of the interviewees that we talked to that were funded through STAR 1 made significant impacts in their work. For example, Media Foundation for West Africa, were so effective in their project around 2012 general elections to the recognition of many stakeholders in Ghana<sup>4</sup>. They have emerged as real experts on working with the media, politicians and citizens on avoiding hate speech, personality defamations and other indecent language on radio and other media platforms.

The impact has been an incremental improvement on objective dialogue, which is expected to eventually improve the quality of elections. In many countries, the increase in hate speech is one of the deterrents to women participation in politics as women prefer to maintain their decency to political positions. Other organisations such as Ghana Decides, Voice Ghana, Ghana Federation of the Disabled and many more, worked so effectively around the 2012 General Elections such that STAR Ghana is well recognized for the support provided. Ultimately, STAR 1 emerged, as shown in Box 1 below.

##### *Box 1: Summary STAR Ghana 1 Achievements*

*There is unequivocal consensus among key stakeholders that STAR-Ghana made a significant positive contribution to improving the effectiveness of civil society organisations and Parliament. 4 areas of success are notable:*

- a) Parliamentary strengthening, in particular shaping the way parliamentary committees and structures see themselves and their role in consolidating accountable democratic governance.*
- b) Enhancing the effectiveness and vibrancy of civil society. There are 4 strands here: (a) Increasing the range of actors (inter alia, small Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) and Community Based Organisation (CBOs), citizens movements, professional associations and trade unions, faith based organisations); (b) deepening discussion on the sustainability of Civil Society (CS) i.e. going beyond fund raising to issues of financial management, leadership, membership and legitimacy; (c) broadening the discourse on development and social exclusion; (d) creating the space and platforms for self-reflection and learning.*
- c) Engaging the media in a manner that moves them beyond partisan politics and encourages them to become effective partners of civil society and parliament in promoting accountable and transparent governance and the delivery of public services.*
- d) Election Cycle Support (ECS): STAR-Ghana's engagement in ECS was seen by many stakeholders as vital to the conduct of a peaceful election and the promotion of issue based*

<sup>4</sup> They implemented a project called, "Using Media to Promote Decent Language, Issue-Based Campaigning for a Peaceful, Free and Fair Elections in Ghana in 2012".

*discussions. Leaving aside the question of the extent of this contribution, STAR Ghana's visible presence in such an important national process, helped establish its reputation and reach with the multitude of critical partners.*

Source: STAR 1 Project Completion Report, 2015

In proceeding to STAR 2, the programme produced flagship projects in the sense of achieving outcomes and impacts, including:

- 'Elections (promoting peaceful, credible and issue-based, and inclusive elections),
- Gender Equality and social inclusion (advancing gender equality and social inclusion through citizen engagement and collective action),
- media (effectiveness of media action and partnerships with civil society for accountable, responsive and inclusive governance), anticorruption (fighting corruption effectively through citizen, community, and civil society),
- and Local Governance (inclusive governance and citizenship at the local level).

The specific achievements can be summarized in four main categories: - policy and practice achievements, addressing vulnerability, improving services, and citizen participation in local governance. The interviews that we conducted, analysis of annual reviews, mid-term review reports, and reports from learning events that we reviewed contain a lot of evidence in this regard. The sub-sections below provide highlights on some of the significant achievements so as to form the basis for articulating the premise for recommendations for the STAR Ghana Foundation. As such, they are not exhaustive of the depth and breadth of the work of STAR Ghana 1 and 2 nor are a reflection of a standard end of programme evaluation. Therefore, the evidence is not laid out in the form of outcomes of systematic contribution analysis nor process tracing.

#### *Policy and Practice changes.*

Fieldwork interviews with a number of organisations showed a significant STAR Ghana partner influences on government policies at the national and sub-national levels. NORSAAC, for example, influenced new protocols for administration of health services in traditional mental homes resulting from strategic partnerships between (HRAC) and the Ghana Mental Health Authority (MHA). Additionally, our interviews with SEND Ghana revealed that they influenced, the revision of the 'Pay As You Earn' policy introduced by the Government. In this case, they used evidence from their progressive taxation initiative to show the impact of taxes on different strata of the population, to influence government through the relevant Select Committees of Parliament, as well as the Ministry of Finance and the Ghana Revenue Authority (GRA).

Meanwhile, a total of 16 policies and practices were either changed or put into practice at the national and local levels as a result of STAR Ghana during the most recent period, as reported in the STAR Ghana 9-month period report. The report cited national level policies including, for example, the Legal Instrument for the Zongo Development Fund and the National Youth Policy which is under revision. These results emanate from the effective relationships that STAR Ghana established with the National Youth Authority and the Ministry of Inner city and Zongo development.

Our fieldwork with Friends of the nation showed examples of local level influence on the District Assembly Common Fund in Tarkwa Nsuem Municipality.

Furthermore, the 9 months report shows STAR-Ghana as also having contributed significantly to the passage of the RTI Law, having provided support to coalitions of CSO partners (the RTI Coalition, the Media Coalition on the RTI) and the Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee of Parliament over the past 8 years.

STAR Ghana is also associated with support to FIDA (a grant partner) and the Domestic Violence and Victim Support Unit (DOVVSU) of the Ghana Police Service. This ultimately led to the establishment of the Protocol for reporting abuse cases involving persons with disability (PWDs). As a clear impact, this protocol has been developed and adopted by the Ghana Police Service (GPS) to the effect that a least 80 Police Officers have been trained in the protocol and are using it, such as in Sunyani and Ho districts.

IDEG, who our mission visited as part of the fieldwork confirmed having engaged with State/National elite groups including the Cabinet, Judiciary, Leadership and Members of Parliament, Council of State, Former Presidents, National House of Chiefs, National Peace Council, Forum of regional ministers and MMDCEs, and leaders of political parties. The aim was to influence the timely submission of the Constitutional Amendment Bill on election of MMDCEs before Parliament's recess in December 2018, which in turn provided the basis for successful influence with regards to:

- Publication of the Draft Bill For the amendment of Article 55(3) in December 2018 in the Gazette;
- Laying of the Constitutional Instruments (CI) for holding of the 2019 District Level Elections and the Referendum on Constitutional Amendment in Parliament; and
- Laying before Parliament of the Constitutional Amendment Bill to amend the non-entrenched provision of Article 243(1).

#### *Promotion of rights of the vulnerable*

The mainstreaming of Gender and Social inclusion, especially during STAR 2 resulted in significant results in relation to inclusion of vulnerable groups. For instance, our field visit to the work of Skyy Media Group confirmed their innovative use of the Content Management System (Database) transferred computers at the district level to enable them to track the access to the 3% District Assembly Common Fund (DACF) by People With Disabilities (PWDs). The two; Shama and Wassa East have the updated version of the CMS to guide decisions for the selection and vetting of PWDs' applications. As a result, there are five more assemblies that have shown interest to adopt the CMS for the management of the fund: Effia Kwesimintsim Municipal Assembly, Nzema East Municipal Assembly, and Amenfi West Municipal Assembly, Amenfi East Municipal, and Ahanta West Municipal Assembly. This is an indication of how a working innovation of using a digitized system has the potential for scaling up scaled up and help improve efficiency and evidence for work done by actors, regarding the management of the DACF for PWDs.

Our fieldwork also showed convincing evidence from the work of SONGTABA, Radio Ada and VOICE Ghana that lend support to the assertion that STAR 2 indeed promoted the rights of the vulnerable in the Ghanaian society. However, these impacts largely remained localized and missed out on opportunities of being harvested/modelled for scale up. SONGTABA's work for example led to the review of District Assembly by-laws of four Districts in Northern Region. This could have been taken up by the GESI Cluster at scale but the opportunity was missed.

In terms of Gender, the field visits that we conducted shows the work of Abantu, one of the STAR Ghana's Strategic Partners noted Tema West and Ho Municipal Assemblies, as having

restored hope for contesting in elections for some women who contested in previous elections and had lost, were disinterested in contesting in the upcoming elections. As a result of the work of Abantu and partners, the 2019 District Level Elections will include these women as contestants for candidacy for elections, which was not the case in the previous elections. Box 2 illustrates some of the major highlights from the Abantu project reports.

*Box 2: Abantu work on Women representation*

*It is evident that the knowledge of women's participation and representation has been widely accepted and support has been garnered for women's increased representation and participation for the upcoming 2019 District Assemblies Elections. This includes interest for supporting women from range of influential people in the district, which includes traditional authorities, religious leaders and district assembly officials. Abantu reported that these stakeholders have understood, embraced and committed to women's increased participation in district level elections. Duty bearers have acknowledged the abysmal representation of women and have become conscious of the marginalisation of women in decision making.*

*The supporting stakeholders also includes chiefs, queen mothers, reverend ministers of various churches, Imams and district assembly officials have committed to continuous sensitization and support for women's candidature. Some have specifically nominated women within their districts to contest for the upcoming district level elections. This understanding, acceptance and commitment of duty bearers that made it easier for the compilation of women aspirants in the districts and has resulted in the emergence of "male champions" who serve as ambassadors for women's candidature in the 2019 District Assembly Elections within their respective districts.*

*The Ministry of Local Government for example acknowledged its statutory mandate of at least 30% appointment at the local level and pledged to do its best to ensure this realization. The Director at the Department of Gender, MoGCSP, was specifically disappointed by the figures and pledged to identify resources for increasing national awareness and supporting women's candidature. The NCCE on the other hand, committed to increasing awareness on women's inclusion within its activity schedules. The media equally pledged to increase the sensitization prior to the elections and make the women's issue a national agenda for continuous discussion. Civil society present committed to partnering with each other and with NCCE and MoGCSP to increase the awareness on women's representation and participation in the 2019 district level elections. It is obvious that the national and specific data on women's low representation provided an entry point for effective engagement, discussion and strategizing for the upcoming elections. Key stakeholders pledged to use their platforms to change the status quo.*

In addition to the Abantu experience illustrated in Box 2, our field visits also confirmed the work of Radio Ada and Songtaba, in terms of how Star Ghana successfully promoted the rights of women and their inclusion in decision making through changes in local legislations and strengthening institutions that promote and sustains those rights. Through the efforts of Songtaba for example, the by-laws of four District Assemblies have been revised, approved and are awaiting to be gazetted. Songtaba's work, in collaboration with other grantees of Star Ghana contributed to strengthening state institutions like CHRAJ, NCCE, Ghana Education Service, the Ghana Police Service (DOVVSU) and the Department of Social Welfare to be more effective in the discharge of their respective mandates.

Furthermore, the work of Radio Ada mobilized women to fight for their rights to participate in the salt industry, in local governance and fight dehumanizing treatments they go through during widowhood. One key outcome of this was the Ada Declaration and Action Plan produced during one of the convenings on International Women's Day. This now serves as the basis for advocacy for the rights of women and for their needs to be addressed.

NORSAAC, YeFI and GDCA's work also give credence to the effectiveness of Star Ghana in policy influencing and inclusion. Collectively and in collaboration with other actors, they established and strengthened convening and coordinating mechanisms that helped to improve the credibility of election and referendum outcomes—peaceful elections, improved participation in the electoral processes and good governance. Through GDCA and YeFI, Star Ghana helped in mobilizing the youth and institutionalized their inclusion in, and promotion of, good governance at the local level through the community initiatives they strengthened (Youth parliaments and Community Journalists).

It is instructive to note that through STAR Ghana, it is now possible to see CSO partners that are relating inclusion of women in this case, to the combination of positive factors inclusive of support from various stakeholders of influence, beyond women themselves. It is our view that this is where the embedded PEAs that STAR Ghana has included in its programming strategies would have added significant value, unpacking the cultural, societal, political and economic factors that inform gender and social inclusion. During the time of the review, STAR Ghana was in the process of conducting Six pilots at grantee level. It is hoped that these pilots will demonstrate how other Grant Partners can embed PEA in their interventions.

#### *Improved democratic participation in local governance*

A number of projects that we reviewed demonstrate that STAR Ghana has also leveraged conducive relationships with stakeholders within government, enabling CSO partners to engage government officials beyond the frontline ones as was the case in the past with most social accountability projects. The narratives from the project staff that we interviewed underscore the credibility of STAR Ghana Programme Management Team (PMT) as well as the high calibre of the Ghanaian leaders on the Steering Committee. The mention of STAR Ghana adds the difficult to explain credibility of the initiative at hand and persuades the higher authorities to open doors and listen.

It is to this new way of working that most interviewees attribute the achievements of many STAR Ghana, especially STAR 2 and also at the local level, as illustrated in Box 3.

*Box 3: An example of the GESI programme in terms of the inclusion of the youth in local governance by strengthening local level institutions (Youth Parliaments and community Journalists). Also, a demonstration of how **convening and catalyzing** were operationalized at the local level:*

#### *Youth Empowerment For Life (YeFI).*

*An organization that seeks to empower the youth economically, socially and politically. This was based on the notion that “traditionally, the youth were not part of the decision-making space and lived individualistic lives”. It was registered in 2010 to give a VOICE to the youth as Community Journalists, build their skills and entrepreneurial development. They established and nurtured:*

- *Youth Centres as rallying points for the youth and for community rallies, for coordinating and mobilizing various youth groups. Later, they founded an innovative idea of Youth*



*Parliaments to identify issues, invite stakeholders, create/simulate a parliamentary environment through which they could deal with the issues around and affect them.*

- *STAR-Ghana funded their project dubbed “You Speak UP”, an initiative to enhance the participation of the youth in governance. This was integrated in the Youth parliament concept. It started in 2017 and promoted inclusive participation in five (5) Districts: Saboba, Yendi, Nanumba South, Nanumba North and Sagnerigu Districts. Two key components: Youth parliaments and Community Journalists. Key achievements:*
- *Improved youth participation in local governance. In Saboba for example, the participation of the youth in local governance led to the improvements in the level of internally generated revenue in that district. This has improved delivery of social services to the people. For example the building of Nurses’Quarters in gbangbanpong, abandonment of Open Defecation in Sagnerigu and the subsequent construction of household toilets, the construction of a Child Health Centre at Malshegu, provision of school furniture at Yong-duuni community in the Sagnerigu District; in collaboration with other NGOs to build a Chips Compound, Library and Nurses’Quarters in the Nanumba North District (in the Pusuga community).*
- *Through the Youth Parliament, duty bearers were summoned to explain what they were doing and to commit to meeting their demands. These sittings were important convenings which always produced communiques (samples are available. Committee members of the Youth Parliament used these communiques to follow up with duty bearers to ensure that they fulfill their promises—**catalyzing**. Follow-ups were also made by the leadership of the parliament-minority and majority.*

*Source: Project reports to STAR Ghana*

Ultimately, this shows the significance of relationships developed between CSOs and government at the national and local levels that STAR Ghana was able to leverage as the most effective way to achieve change. However, what was not very evident was how STAR Ghana joined up or aggregated these many individual successes into a momentum for change for addressing national issues, in a vertically integrated way. This was a missed opportunity for a programme that covers almost all districts in Ghana while also engaging at the highest level of government. **It is recommended that the STAR Ghana should develop a clear strategy for harnessing and aggregating successes at the individual organisation or theme level as a solid evidence for engaging government and other actors from local to national level.**

### **3.2 Adaptations that STAR Ghana went through and the extent to which this led to greater results**

This section of the report identifies the adaptations that Star Ghana went through and demonstrates the extent to which these adaptations contributed to achieving greater results. From our reviews and findings from the field, we identified two main areas of adaptations that have occurred in STAR Ghana over the 2 phases: changes in the Theory of Change and, accordingly or consequently, the focus of the programme. These two contributed to achieving more and better results as discussed in the following sections.

#### **3.2.1 Adaptation of Theory of Change (ToC)**

Methodologically, we used the literature review during the deep dive and information from interviews to understand the key differences between STAR 1 and 2 in terms of theory of



change. STAR 1 (2010 – 2015) sought to get to increased “accountability and responsiveness of government, traditional authorities, and private enterprise to Ghanaian citizens” by increasing the influence of CSOs and Parliament in the governance of public goods and service delivery<sup>5</sup>.

Through our interviews and review of reports, we confirmed that STAR Ghana was indeed implemented based on this premise and significant achievements were made and reported on. In particular, results were registered in parliamentary strengthening, improving vibrancy of civil society, engaging media to work beyond partisan politics, and effective engagement in the electoral cycle support. However, there was doubt as to the extent that vibrant civil society and a strong Parliament can influence the accountability and responsiveness of Ghana’s government, traditional authorities and the private sector. This meant that in STAR 2, a much tighter theory of change was required, inclusive of pathways that can clearly demonstrate the influence of civil society and parliament.

Our contextual reviews also showed that the programme conducted two key PEAs, the PEA study on civil society<sup>6</sup> and another PEA that informed the design of the Democratic Governance call<sup>7</sup>, which was a successor call to the Election call which worked around 2012 elections (STAR Ghana, 2014)<sup>8</sup>. The civil society PEA study specifically pointed to the fact that there was an incremental increase in spaces for Civil Society participation in policy dialogue. However, the key observation was that civil society participation in policy dialogue was ad hoc rather than strategically planned. It was limited to high level meetings while marginalizing the sectors and CSOs operating at the sub-national and community. The study also observed that prior programmes such as RAVI, G-RAP and the Civil Society Support facility under DANIDA's Good Governance Programme reflected the mindset of donors and countries in the 2000's<sup>9</sup>. The mindset led to programmes that had a mixture of core funding and direct funding in responding to different types of civil society organizations in Ghana. However, the unintended negative consequence of this shift to mostly pooled funding was that they were essentially crowding out smaller organizations, and encouraging resource driven forms of civil society engagement.

STAR Ghana 1 and 2 in this context, therefore, was also set as a way to provide a significant amount of pooled funding, as a multi donor facility so as to help CSOs focus on addressing systemic issues in policy and practice rather than competing for funding. STAR Ghana 1 therefore, was set to go beyond the predecessor programmes in increasing reach to organisations at the local and sub-national levels. However, it was weaker in addressing systemic issues, and STAR Ghana 2 sought to address this challenge by supporting civil society to address systemic issues and not just increase reach and provide access to policy opportunities, more needed to be done.

STAR 2 (2015 -2020) built on strengths of STAR 1 to have a much stronger focus on facilitating and supporting civil society actions by acting as Convener, Catalyst and Coordinator (3Cs), with an inbuilt Learning role, which from the interviews we had, was based on critical

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<sup>5</sup>The main outputs to get to this included: enhancing the capability of Grant Partners (GPs) to hold government to account in a sustainable way, enhancing legislative bodies and Grant Partner's engagement with government cycles, improving the quality evidence available to inform government policy and practice, enhancing media coverage of development issues and, enhancing the effectiveness of supported parliamentary Committees.

<sup>6</sup>See Tsikata, D; Gyekye-Jandoh, M and Hushie, M (2013) 'Political Economy Analysis (PEA) of Civil Society in Ghana', STAR Ghana, Accra.

<sup>7</sup>This PEA influenced the design of the Democratic call in terms of providing a split between managed calls (for selected CSOs and think tanks with proven abilities to work in specific areas of the government business cycle) and an open call. In all the call was meant to support decentralised governance, electoral reforms and citizen engagement with parliament.

<sup>8</sup>See Draft Report: Democratic Governance End of Thematic Review', Project Alternatives Limited in collaboration with Delinks Services, February, 2014

<sup>9</sup>See summary of reviews of multi-donor support mechanisms for civil society around this period <https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/57a08a01e5274a27b2000393/hdq940.pdf>

reflections of the PMT, evaluation lessons from STAR 1 and those of the Steering Committee. The argument was that if STAR-Ghana convenes, catalyses and coordinates spaces and alliances with relevant stakeholders on salient issues ripe for change, this will bring about a well-informed active citizenry which influences governance processes and structures that will effectively contribute to transformational change around key challenges of poverty, inequality and inclusion for all citizens. Our focus during the review was mainly on two key elements of the theory of change, the 'issue identification' and the 3Cs (see page 11 of the STAR Ghana Theory of Change, November, 2017) because these are the elements that appeared as anchoring the difference between what STAR 1 could not do and what STAR 2 could do.

### *Identification of issues*

It is usually difficult to distinguish salience as meaning 'the most important issues' though perhaps not as obviously expressed or just that they are the most mentioned issues and therefore can easily be associated with having the most traction among actors and hence form entry points for programming. Our view is that 'salience' refers to the most important issues that are often hidden and hence require repeated convenings and PEAs to get to them. This 'salience' requires further drilling down through Political Economy Analysis that is embedded practice and the PEA of the type of 'thinking and acting politically' or in politically savvy ways. They cannot easily be generated through single event convenings. The initial convenings will likely find entry points for the obvious or as alluded to the DFID Annual Review 2018 'topical issues'

In practice, this would entail conducting convenings on a lesser number of broader issues than were covered under STAR Ghana so as to avoid spreading analysis too thinly and on short term. It would also allow the grant partners, supported by STAR Ghana, to drill down to the hidden salient issues within issues, and find not just entry points but the kind of actors that can work on those, and get them to action, along with their incentives and behaviours.

The interviews showed that the current STAR Ghana practice is to identify the issue first but is not able to sufficiently use the convenings to support drilling down to the root causes, through a long whole approach. **The embedding PEA approach that is currently being implemented through Six pilot projects would be a way to inform the needed 'drilling down'. The pilots are useful but need to then be given space so that they can form the loci for learning to think and act politically for grant partners in the overall programme. It should also provide insights to the wider PEA embedded in the application of the 3Cs and L.**

Accordingly, we conclude that the wider scope of broader issues tabled for analysis blurred the quality of PEA that was done. The introduction of PEA was good but, in our opinion, it is currently not as successfully used to achieve outcomes at a much deeper level as is the potential of usage of PEA methods. In this context, we agree with the DFID Annual Review 2018 that the preoccupation of the convening, catalysing and coordinating role should be used to open spaces for civil society to influence policy actions on issues of key strategic importance. However, for us, this would come from a PEA-led deeper drilling explained above.

**We recommend that the issue selection should concentrate on finding issues within issues through a lot more work being spent on drilling down on the first expression of issues and ultimately to the route systemic issues that are often hidden or otherwise pop up in different dimensions during implementation of projects. The argument is that unless there is a disciplined and PEA informed process of issue identification using the 3Cs and L, and embedded PEA, there will be attempts at tackling topical issues but not addressing the root causes of poor governance.**

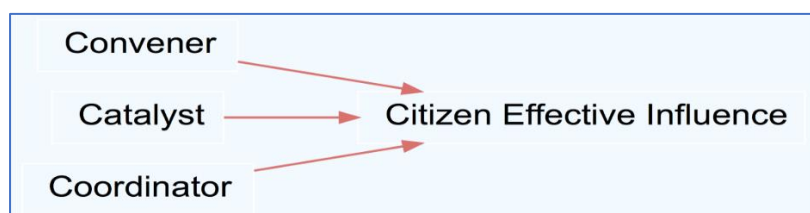
### *The 3C's and L in the Theory of Change*

The 3Cs and L in the STAR 2 Theory of Change was developed by STAR Ghana drawing on lessons from STAR 1, as a form of adapting to the context and what was learnt, and is explained as follows:

- *Convening existing inclusive dialogue and collaboration between civil society and other stakeholders;*
- *Coordinate and support strategic collaboration within civil society and between civil society, government and businesses;*
- *Catalyse active citizenship and collective action, both nationally and locally;*
- *Facilitate continuous learning to harvest and share lessons, innovations and evidence to fuel wider-scale change.*

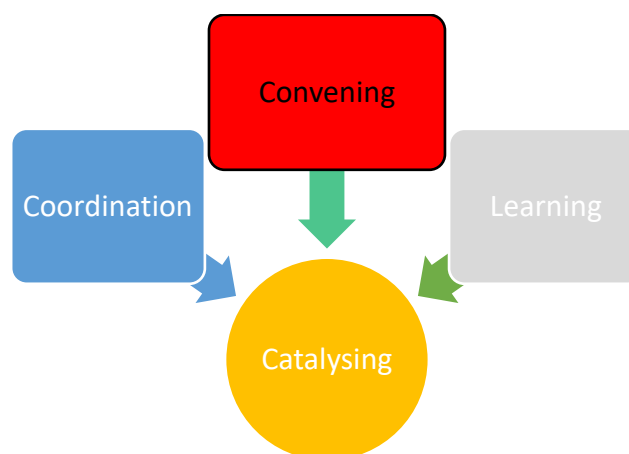
**STAR-Ghana Approach to Change** is framed around the 3Cs and L (convener, coordinator and catalyst) and Learning approach, GESI – Gender Equality and Social Inclusion and the Supply and Demand focus. Furthermore, the logic or pathways are shown diagrammatically as follows:

**Diagram 1. 3Cs**



However, in practice, we found that, as presented under the programme focus below, it is the convening part of the ToC that became more pronounced, both in terms of the statistics emerging from the reports and DFID's annual reviews and how interviewees elucidated them. In one way, it could be argued that there was no need to try to balance these elements as they are mutually inclusive and not linear. In another way, and with an eye on the Star Ghana Foundation, it could be argued that the true practical picture of the 3Cs and L is where the main focus remains on convenings but where the main purpose is to catalyse, as shown in Figure 3.

*Figure 3: Reworked relationship between of the 3C's and L*



**The main recommendation here, in terms of the theory of change and in view of the emerging SGF, is that the programme uses its proven CONVENING power, along with learning and collaboration/ coordination roles to catalyse change.** This would still be in tandem with the stipulated dual focus for STAR-Ghana: i) catalysing the efforts of citizens towards systemic and strategic impact and change ii) work towards the creation of a Ghanaian-run, body corporate entity to sustain support beyond STAR-Ghana programme.

The current ToC articulation of the catalytic approach pertains to the process of identifying, facilitating and supporting interventions and approaches through joint working with new and strategic partners, with the potential to catalyse the nature of change being sought. The current ToC sees this as being put to practice through grants, as a mechanism to support civil society actors in their efforts for systemic change. The idea is here to fund issues around innovation, energy and magic moments. However, with the reworked 3Cs and L through this review as shown in Figure 2 the convenings, collaborations/ coordination and lesson learning can be seen as avenues to catalysing change, especially when done with embedded PEA engrained in them.

#### *A greater proportion of assumptions for STAR Ghana held to be true*

The stakeholders that Star Ghana worked with were willing to engage and participate largely because Star Ghana was able to garner a lot of goodwill, stay politically neutral and remain a good neighbour to do business with. The PMT worked well with the Steering Committee and Governing Council whom they relied on to manage these relationships. The national environment for engagement has also been positive and hence promoted active engagement and participation which contributed to the successes Star Ghana achieved.

Credibility of Star Ghana. A deliberate effort was made to ensure that Star Ghana remained politically neutral and this helped to maintain its credibility. Also, the deliberate, transparent and thorough process of selecting Star Ghana's subscribers and GC members to lead the organization has helped.

It was however more difficult in terms of Star Ghana's ability to attract funding by 2020 and attract the much-needed private sector support (the third and fourth assumptions). Although we note that at the time of the review, attempts were made to build the structures for fundraising, this had not translated into funds for the Foundation. Questions still remain whether indeed there is funding available and where there is, must Star Ghana compete with civil society organisations which they are meant to serve.

The national environment of Ghana as a middle-income country makes fundraising within the NGO circles difficult. The concept of Ghana beyond aid has compounded the situation. Attracting private sector support is a bit challenging because engagement of professional bodies which Star Ghana wanted to stimulate under Star 1 did not go far. The SGF needs to develop a strategy for engaging with the Private Sector for both fundraising and as an active partner for change.

### **3.2.2 Changes in programme focus**

The second adaptation Star Ghana made was a shift in programme focus and approach. These included an emphasis on embedding the PEA approach, strengthening GESI approach, opening different grant windows and co-creation of grant partner projects, 3C & L,

COPL, Clustering, etc. In this sub-section, we discuss these and how they contributed to achieving greater results.

### 3.2.2.1 The PEA Approach

As discussed earlier, STAR Ghana used political economy analysis within STAR 1. For example, the PEA of Civil Society and then the PEA that informed the setting up of the Democratic Governance thematic call. During STAR2, the programme sought to improve its PEA analysis, and conducted a 3-day capacity building for PMT and SD Direct, which was led by ODI. The purpose was to improve the programme's objectives. The overall objectives of the workstream are to:

- develop a broader understanding within STAR of the use of political economy analysis
- identify practical ways in which PEA can support operational programming
- highlight tools and techniques which can be used to embed PEA within programming

The programme conducted three scoping studies in themes including GESI, anti-corruption and local governance. The significant difference between PEAs conducted in STAR 1 and PEAs conducted in STAR 2 are shown in the Table 2, a figure which came from interviews with ODI:

Table 2: Comparing PEAs during STAR 1 and STAR2

	STAR Ghana – Phase 1	STAR Ghana – Phase 2
<b>Type of analysis</b>	Macro, national-level and sector level political economy analysis	Focus on selection of entry points; problem identification and problem-driven political economy analysis (to include focus on GESI)
<b>Output</b>	Stand-alone analysis	On-going, dynamic and systematic analysis
<b>Use of analysis?</b>	Upfront analysis used to select issues. Subsequent analysis undertaken but delinked from operational programming	Strategic use of analysis to inform programme design, planning, decision-making, monitoring and evaluation in operationally relevant ways

Source: Chambers, Vikki (2016) *STAR Ghana Technical Approach: Political Economy Analysis*

Within this capacity building was the introduction of 'Embedded PEA', to improve the way the partners and the programme conduct political analysis while doing, or in the course of action. The evidence we generated through interviews with ODI and review of reports, shows that instead of letting all partners practice and use principles of 'embedded PEA', the programme selected Six partners across the different calls including YEFL, NORSAAC, Netright, CDD, Lead Afrique and Voto mobile. The assumption here, as pointed out earlier, was that as this limited number of partners improve their analysis and documentation, through deeper and more nuanced theories of change, they can improve their implementation strategies, achieve better outcomes and ultimately report on changes that best reflect the knowledge and experience throughout the programme. The thinking itself was layered at three levels, the partners thinking, actions and effectiveness in achieving outcomes.

From our perspective, the programme has struggled to engrain PEA in the 'embedded PEA sense', where partners can be seen to be comfortably using PEA to inform their understanding of the contextual dynamics and proving their strategies in a systematic way. This was tested

by the programme itself by attending elements of PEA in the quarterly monitoring templates. The programme reviews indicated “these sections are not always being used as we might have hoped in support of analysis, learning and adaptation”. The same view came across to us when we interviewed the ODI Research Associate responsible for supporting STAR Ghana on PEAs. Furthermore, it is evident that while the PMT might be thinking about PEA in an intuitive sense in their daily work, there is no systematic mechanisms of combining the national level PEA and partner’s PEAs at the grassroots and sub-national levels so as to form a comprehensive view of what seems to work and not work, and hence a shift in the overall strategies. The programme learning review (see Strategic Learning Report, 2017) came to the same conclusion of the need for the ‘rich’ M&E and grant reporting data to be worked back into improving the overall programme strategies, informing adaptation processes. However, this has not been possible.

The thinking around ‘Embedded PEA has to be wrapped around the Theories of Change that partners and the programme form of their own journeys, with a key set of questions that they can use to routinely monitor and examine how they are moving on this journey. Evidence from elsewhere has shown that it is possible to support grant partners to articulate their theories of change, and then develop learning journeys that adopt a mixture of log-frame, outcome mapping and outcome harvesting data. This can also be aggregated to the programme level (see Tembo, 2013)<sup>10</sup>. This monitoring process needs to be situated in a periodic (at least 6 months or one year intervals) of national or sub-regional PEAs so that it can inform why certain results are achieved in certain contexts and not others. In other words, this national or subnational PEA can be overlaid on the emerging results shown from partner’s embedded PEA.

It is recommended the two forms of PEA, the general and thematic, worked at the national level should be linked to what is being learnt from the partner PEAs. The partner PEAs should use more qualitative approaches such as Outcome Mapping and Outcomes Harvesting to track the changes in key actor behaviours. Three tools are recommended to be used concurrently, AIIM, Outcome Mapping and Outcomes Harvesting. It is these tools, which when combined with the Log-Frame indicators can give a picture of the changes that are occurring with what context.

### **3.2.2.2 The 3 Cs and L Approach**

According to the ToC, citizens’ ability to influence change was to emerge from STAR Ghana’s ability to convene in spaces for dialogue so that opportunities and critical entry points are identified, catalysing active citizenship (which includes active civil society) around salient issues, and coordination of citizen voice and actions through promotion of joint influencing actions while also creating relationships where duty bearers are able to effectively respond to these voices.

The interviews conducted give an overwhelming value to the 3Cs and L approach adopted by STAR as one of Unique Selling Points given the historical experience of working with CSOs and government in Ghana. The programme’s own reviews also demonstrate the same. Through the 3C’s approach, STAR Ghana has established itself as a true broker of relationships among different actors and delivering impact.

At the impact level, several projects demonstrated significant impacts, as illustrated in Box 5

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<sup>10</sup>Tembo, F (2013), ‘Rethinking Social Accountability in Africa: lessons from the Mwananchi programme



*Box 5: Strengthening state and non-state actors through targeted grant mechanisms, supporting convening and coordinating mechanisms to improve the credibility of election outcomes and promote good governance. (Big impacts on the election of 2016 and the referendum of 2019 through the leadership of NORSAAC).*

*NORSAAC-Northern Sector on Action and Awareness Centre.*

*An empowerment for change organization and works on issues which have total country coverage and impact. Key activities included*

- Influenced the National Gender Strategic Plan and Affirmative Action Bill in collaboration with other stakeholders. Been associated with Star Ghana since G-RAP and RAVI days.*
- Current work with Star Ghana is on: the election call where NORSAAC mobilized CS and excluded groups to be interested in elections. They have created a common platform for CSOs and relevant State institutions (like NCCE and ILGS) to engage on election and related issues. They have also participated in “Life Birth, Smiling Mothers” initiative. Aim here was to strengthen critical institutions, break barriers which had good results. Regional Health Directorate was happy with this and identified it for scale up. They have also Introduced the “Maternal Champion Concept” which was aimed at strengthening the health structure at the community level. This is now in operation in 63 communities*
- Achievements include: Strengthened community-led initiatives for peaceful and credible elections through the formation of consortium with CSOs and State institutions and this contributed a lot to the election outcomes in 2016; reduction in the number of spoilt ballots, over 100 election observers mobilized and trained; supported the EC to deal with issues in some hotspots (East Gonja for example) where there were issues (mainly religious); Led in “The Referendum we want project” where: CSOs were mobilized and trained as election observers and issued a report thereafter. Their view was that due process was ignored! NORSAAC also worked closely with the National Peace Council to deal with post-referendum effects/impacts. They worked closely with IDEG on the review of Article 55 (3) on decentralization.*

Ultimately, it is the convening role of STAR Ghana that came out more explicitly as the main avenue for the identification of issues and partnerships than the collaboration and the catalysing of actions. For instance, the DFID 2018 Annual Review shows that a total of 29 issues emerged from the convenings with 19 addressed. Most of the issues that were being addressed in the programme emanated from convenings held by grant partners. These convenings formed part of grant partners’ projects and in some cases they were held around issues they have been engaging on for a while.

The Annual Reviews also show that there were national level convenings focused on broader issues to include ‘Ghana Beyond Aid’, NGO and RTI Bills, Child Health Policy, disability, the Free Senior High School Policy and the Double Track Education System as well as sustainability of civil society organisations in Ghana. On the other hand, local level convenings (held by grant partners) aligned with STAR-Ghana’s grant focus such as anti-corruption, Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI), democracy (Elections) and local governance. Topics covered included Gender based violence, unapproved fees at health facilities, school feeding programme, teacher supervision, fertilizer smuggling and rosewood harvesting.

However, the from the interviews we emerged with the thinking that the reason these convenings are often one off and not systematically following through some of the emerging issues through several iterations of convenings is that the programme is grants heavy, and hence delivering the programme took away time needed to embed the 3Cs and L approach

among the staff as well as GPs. Another interviewee remarked 'it should instead have been Human Resource heavy' instead of grants heavy'.

Our view is that the programme should focus much more on the 'issues' and how these issues are changing, so that convenings are used to understand if the issues are being resolved or new ones are coming up as a result of deeper political economy analysis as well as when triggered by partner interventions. In this way, it will be possible to see that convenings of different types are coming up, as they respond to the changing dynamics around the issues, and also even the facilitation process will be different from one convening to another.

It is recommended that the STAR Foundation should use the likely reduction in funding to strategically rebalance between grant provision and investing in high quality Human Resource capacity, especially in the 3Cs and L approach. **Furthermore, it is recommended that the programme thinks carefully about the relationship among the 3Cs and L, in theory of change terms so that the Convening, Coordination and Learning roles should be seen as strategies for Catalysing action. They are not all at the same level, as practice seems to show. This has been explained in the critique of the theory of change section of this report.**

Looking through the work of strategic partners supported by STAR Ghana, it is possible to see strong partnerships emerging at the national and local levels, especially with the parliament. For example, at the national level, GP Odekro assessed the effectiveness of Parliament and MP's. Following the assessment, Odekro and Parliament are developing a partnership to undertake joint assessments of the House and MPs.

STAR-Ghana by September 2018 had signed agreements with 58 strategic partners (CSOs, Media, Ministries, Departments and Agencies as well as Parliament); and 45 % of these strategic partners have secured commitments to address systemic issues. These include policy influencers (CSOs/Media) under the Elections, GESI/Media, Anti-corruption and Local Governance Calls. In respect of state actors, STAR-Ghana established partnerships with eight (8) Parliamentary-select committees, the National Council for Persons with Disability (NCPD) and the National Youth Authority (NYA).

As illustrated in most of the results presented in this report, convenings have been by and large the most recognized (by partners) and effective approach to facilitating change processes in the STAR Ghana programme. For example, at national level, convenings were effectively used to broker neutral spaces for discussions on salient national issues, National dialogue on Double Track System (Free SHS) – providing spaces at regional and national level for in-depth interaction between key stakeholders (citizens, teachers, MoE, students) to understand the issues. These convenings resulted in key challenges unearthed, such as issue of teachers working double shift systems, private schools as a key constituent of pre-tertiary education in Ghana. There was also a National Health Dialogue, Youth unemployment dialogue- provided space at regional level. Flag strategic national issues not being taken up in national conversations; Ghana Beyond Aid (GBA) and implications for the Northern Region resulting in a communique on identified issues relating to GBA in Savannah Zone.

At the local level convenings have helped to strengthening local institutions to promote the rights of women and PWDs. The work of some of the grantees led to fundamental changes in human rights at the local level through the revision of by-laws, improved access to social services (, increased awareness of, and demand for affirmative action. Strengthened local institutions to give PWDs a voice and promote their participation in local governance-VOICE Ghana. Strengthened state and non-state actors through targeted grant mechanisms, convenings and coordinating mechanisms to improve the credibility of election outcomes and promote good governance. (Big impacts on the election of 2016 and the referendum of 2019 through the leadership of NORSAAC and the Elections Cluster).



The 2017 Strategic Learning Event shows that programme has learnt a number of key lessons in using convenings as an approach. These include the fact that convenings are most useful in contributing to reversing citizen's sense of powerlessness when faced with issues that seem to be beyond them; drawing attention to good practices, new initiatives and exchange of information and learning. Convening have also been useful for facilitating mentorship between large and smaller organisations. Suffice here to say that the funding support from STAR Ghana has enabled most organisations to then immediately practice what they have learnt. Lastly, convenings are useful for identifying salient issues and break down silos mentality among CSOs, while fostering collaboration.

### **3.2.2.3 The Cluster Approach**

Star Ghana introduced a Cluster approach to draw together GPs working on similar issues for learning and collaboration for effectiveness, and it has largely been the mechanisms for delivering GESI. This includes for instance, the Cluster on Land Rights engaging Parliament on review of the land bill to include provisions for GESI analysis, Cluster on Essential services influencing budgets for mental healthcare, and a campaign on disability inclusion.

The workshop we had with these clusters working on various themes showed a lot of enthusiasm among participating representatives of their organisations. This was evident in a number of initiatives they mentioned beyond the formal spaces where they meet, such as the emergence of WhatsApp groups, gaining from each other skills on proposal development, increasing reach into communities as they leverage each other's presence in different communities and leveraging relationships for district officials.

Grant Partners rated very high the value of the Cluster Approach to their work. Grant partners have found through this approach spaces to collaborate with other CSOs and the media beyond the STAR-Ghana projects. The grantees agreed that the cluster approach contributed to improved synergies among them, and reduced fatigue and leveraged on individual competencies.

Some interviews with cluster leaders also showed a lot of other innovative clustering, including coming up with common plans of action to help their respective advocacy work while working together and pulling together of evidence to support advocacy. Some of the results through the cluster approach include: Synergies, reducing fatigue, leveraging on individual competencies and increasing information sharing for a common purpose/enhancing the policy influencing agenda.

Clear achievements emanating from the cluster approach include:

- Influenced the participation of more females in governance
- Influenced the process of drafting the Affirmative Action Bill
- During elections, the cluster was able to get attention of the duty bearers because of their numbers. This allowed them to get the results they wanted.
- Peer support and learning
- Community entry is easy and duty bearers are reached easily.
- Attention of the Parliamentary Committee on Land to draft a Land Bill which eventually had to be withdrawn from parliament because of the strong influence of the inputs from GESI—around land ownership

Clearly then, the introduction of the cluster approach enabled both Star Ghana and its partners to work better and achieve results beyond what individual grantees could have achieved. The interviews, however, showed that the cluster participation was among grant partners, and

hence missed out on equally important actors within the Ghanaian ecosystem that would have brought a lot of value and strength to the clusters.

#### **3.2.2.4 Communities of Practice and Learning (CoPL)**

This approach has largely been put to practice through learning events at the Strategic Level (e.g. the 2017 and the 2019 Strategic Learning events) as well as the PMT's documentation of their own learning which has often led to publication of learning products such as the GESI synthesis, Learning document on elections etc. The Strategic Learning event reports show that STAR Ghana used these learning events to reflect on different areas of programming as well as build towards the Foundation.

At the Grant partner level there are several examples of CoPL in practice, being used to on Elections was established with selected Election Call partners and policy level organisations to take forward the recommendations from the March 2017 learning event (and other recommendations from other partners) and facilitate continuous learning and share lessons, innovations and evidence that can support wider-scale change in collaboration with partners around election issues.

For example, a Learning Event was organised in August 2017 to share experiences and good practices among Grant Partners, programme management, state actors, project beneficiaries, political parties and other key stakeholders. A key learning that came across during the project learning event is a sense of collaboration. 35 of the 36 partners (92%) whose projects have ended have demonstrated collaboration by creating sustainable linkages with other grant partners. It is noted effective collaboration enhances the success of projects and reduction of cost and that collaboration among CSO is important for effective results.

#### **3.2.2.5 Grants to Partners**

The provision of grants is perceived in STAR Ghana as part of a strategy for enabling civil society to carry out activities, build coalitions for change, and operate within the available spaces. Grants are therefore one among the diverse 'tools' for driving change. A combination of competitive and more 'managed' funding to reach and support a variety of stakeholders and to help address diverse issues. In other words, the issues at hand and the actors involved shape the kinds of grants that are deployed.

The reality is that one of the major causes for lack of collaboration and engagement capabilities of civil society in Ghana over the years, has been competition for access to funding. STAR Ghana has built up skills of making resources available to civil society while building their capacity to be accountable. The granting system has been arranged in such a way that there are a number of windows for accessing grants, including for non-traditional grantees such as Parliamentary Committees

The STAR team harnessed key lessons from STAR 1 about effective granting that is linked to what the programme has to achieve. They learnt that giving grants alone does not lead to transformational change. To achieve impact grant making must:

- Fit within a broader strategy of the programme in view;
- Be based on sound evidence, both in situation analysis and in understanding of how change happens;
- Incorporate strong evidence gathering to inform subsequent actions.
- Be looking to a sustainable post grants future phase.

STAR 2 therefore perceived grants as one of the diverse ‘tools’ that are needed to drive change. The way grant systems are designed and delivered contributes to unlocking blockages to change and catalyse citizen action through piloting approaches, developing evidence and building alliances among stakeholders.

Competitive funding is used to encourage applicants to deliver safe, lower-risk projects where results can be better assured. However, their short-term nature makes these grants not as suitable for established organisations such as IDEG, Send Ghana, and CDD. These instead prefer more longer term ‘core funding’ type support so they can work on their issues flexibly. Even for the other smaller organisations, the small grants of one year long was among the criticisms because most of them thought the first year is really for learning to implement, often with new STAR Ghana approaches such as GESI and using Embedded PEA. By the time they want to now mainstream new approaches and scale up some of what they have learnt, the granting year is gone.

Furthermore, the practice of providing only ‘one grant at a time’ jeopardised opportunities for access to grant funding as some organisations would have applied for funding not knowing what else was coming. STAR Ghana was not clear enough on the list of possible grantable themes, and organisations tended to apply even when the theme was marginally in their sphere of experience, only to be denied the opportunity when a theme that was at the core came forward at a later date.

The main lesson and recommendation is for STAR Ghana to improve its communication of upcoming grants, in terms of the pipeline and be fully aware that the competition for funding among CSOs issue has not been resolved as yet.

In terms of adapting to the contextual dynamics with regards to grant making, STAR Ghana introduced different grants funding windows including: small grants, which have particularly benefited CBOs who would otherwise not win the competition when put together with the Accra-based CSOs. In this case, the criticism of short period (1 year) has often been cited to which STAR has responded in part by conducting further evaluations to identify those with potentials for scale up and then support them further. According to a DFID informant, it is evident that small grants have enabled STAR to reach to CBOs to address locally salient issues.

Otherwise, STAR Ghana’s own reflective reviews have pointed to another major lesson that ‘managed calls’ is how they can bring together alliances and specifically create the opportunity to engage the media, the private sector and “new” activist groups more likely to result in high impact results around key issues. This includes piloting/taking to scale models of citizen mobilisation and engagement. Lastly, the Strategic Opportunities funding window has enabled STAR to rapidly respond to emerging ‘hot’ issues that can be key to achieving systemic change, so that they create quick entry points for working on the often slippery but yet important issues.

As part of efforts to ensure sustainability additional focus should be given to genuinely building GP capacity. This is particularly important given that donor funding to civil society is likely to reduce and a programme like STAR-Ghana is not envisaged. Feedback from grantees was generally positive as they were unanimous in the role that grants have played in their effectiveness in delivering the salient issues they are addressing as well as even enhancing the effectiveness of state institutions. One of such institutions made this remark:

This notwithstanding, some of them recommend for Star Ghana to consider the different capacities of the grantees they have and treat them differently in terms of the demand for their

time and on compliance. TV3 stated: “It would be impossible to achieve what we did in education, health and disability if it wasn’t for the support of Star Ghana through grants”.

The PMT, consortium members, Funders, successful and non-successful GPs, assessors were also able to review the grant strategy and manual, resulting in the grant making processes being revised, including: steps to tighten the screening of applications through preliminary screening of applications by the PMT to delist those that do not meet the minimum requirements before assigning them to independent assessors; better communication of all STAR-Ghana requirements of GPs in advance of a Call; extending project staff profile requirements to include entire project team members; and building in post-grant sustainability of project results into the grant-making process.

In looking ahead to the SGF it is important to note that grants to partners has also been effective because of the grant processes which includes initial assessment and due diligence, ensuring financial and programme compliance and adherence to necessitate the desired outcomes. It is important for the SGF to maintain these granting capacity elements if they are to remain a credible granting organisation which donors can trust and can grow the necessary disciplines into the granting system.

#### **4. Understanding and demonstration of how the different components of Star Ghana complement and reinforce each other to achieve results**

This section is aimed at discussing the understanding and demonstration of how the different components of STAR-Ghana (PEA's, clusters, Community of Practices, etc) complement and reinforce each other to achieve greater results. These components have been discussed one by one in section 4.2 above, in terms of what was done under each of them and what could have been done differently. This section, therefore, concentrates on how they complemented each other and what could have been done to gain more results.

For example, it is clear that PEAs have informed the selection of issues for convening and the participants who are involved in the conversations. STAR-Ghana's PEA approach has been used consciously in the identification of areas around which to develop Calls and in the framing of learning events. This however pertains much more to the first layer of issues e.g. around broad themes such as education. The deeper dive and iterative ones that follow implementation results have not emerged as much as the ambition of PEA that was set.

There has also been missed opportunities in two areas: embedding PEA within the 3C's and L, and using embedded PE at partner level. The programme rightly sees more conscious use of PEA in the implementation of the 3C&L approach will lead not only to the identification of issues around which stakeholders may gain traction but also in the development of strategies that enhance the effectiveness of actions in catalysing and coordinating stages. This has not happened as envisaged for STAR Ghana 2.

The other important dimension is that PEA could have informed the type/ kind of convenings, catalysing and coordination that would be used, and who is best to facilitate them. Embedded PEA can inform the twists and turns in the issues being addressed' issue within issues'

The clusters approach as a way to reinforce convening power as clusters started to manage their own initiatives through cluster leaders (e.g. the Cluster on Local Governance). It was also a way to mainstream GESI was seen as very effective as organisations would form their own informal networks to share evidence and influence change. In many ways, the Cluster approach has organically strengthened the quality of Communities of Practice in the Programme.

It is also possible to see PEAs having influenced the structure of grants in the programme, the combination of 'open', 'strategic' and managed grants. There was strong evidence that support to organisations such as CDD, Media Foundation for West Africa and SEND Ghana because of their strategic situatedness in the Ghana civil society and state political landscape, enabled them to deepen their work. The 'open' calls on the other hand, though not clearly informed from PEAs was a way to reach out and grow some risky baits before they can be trusted with strategic grants.

However, overall, the review team found that the synergies across the approaches presented above are not necessarily by design, except within the cluster approach where bringing different grantees that are working on the same thing (e.g. land advocacy or education) is seen as both an approach to joining voices and hence greater chances of being responded to by the state, and also a way to learn from each other.

**These different approaches could have been used more strategically together by anchoring them on different parts of the pathways on the STAR Ghana theory of change.** A mapping exercise would show for example which parts of the ToC clustering is most useful for. In the revised 3Cs and L ToC for instance, clustering might enhance learning and collaboration, and then in bringing actors that are working together around a common issue, can catalyse change more than convenings. Convenings appear to be more useful at the start and when looking to define the nature of an issue. The Communities of Practice on the other hand should emerge organically among members that are finding area of work that they want to continue developing together. They can then deepen their practice as well as share their work in their own ecosystems

It is also important to observe that organisations that are likely to drill down to tackling the root causes are often working in the areas of their comfort and attracting STAR Ghana funding to help them achieve what their visions and missions are already setting them to do. In that case, they find leverage from STAR Ghana in terms of convening, where they can now engage high government officials because of STAR Ghana reputation, as indicated in the interview with the Executive Director of Participatory Development Associates (PDA). Otherwise, the majority of the smaller STAR Ghana partners are still building new confidence to engage, finding new relationships through STAR facilitated collaborations.

## 5. Conclusions – what has been learnt about the Unique Selling Points for STAR Ghana that can be brought forward to the STAR Foundation

Our findings discussed in this report show three main distinctive achievements that have incrementally built up a STAR-Ghana track record. These include:

1. An honest broker of relationships among actors within civil society, with the media and the government
2. A unique approach to supporting civil society within the ecosystem through the 3Cs and L at a big scale, which is clearly not a niche for other organisations
3. A capable grant making body

The discussion that follows on evidence from Key Informant Interviews that included a carefully selected range of stakeholders, including the Governing Council members, donors, PMT members (including mainly Christian Aid), and Grant Partners from various categories.

*An honest broker of relationships among civil society, media and government.*

In its first phase (2011-2015), STAR-Ghana delivered a dynamic strategic grant-making programme that worked in partnership with a wide range of civil society organisations (CSOs) as well as Ghana's Parliament. In continuing to STAR 2, four key areas have stood out to establish the STAR Ghana brand. These include:

- **Parliamentary strengthening:** Sharpening the role of parliamentary committees in the consolidation of accountable democratic governance; and strengthening the capacity of parliament itself through the development of a strategic plan, and effectively engaging civil society
- **Enhancing the effectiveness and vibrancy of civil society:** Increasing the range of actors working on active citizenship and accountability, deepening discussion on civil society sustainability and social inclusion, and creating space and platforms for learning; And forging coherence on issues and amplifying voices through coordination of efforts
- **Engaging the media:** Encouraging media groups to become more effective partners of civil society and Parliament, while also acting as an accountability mechanism
- **Effective elections support:** Providing critical support to the conduct of a peaceful election as well as a more robust public debate on vital citizens' issues.

In STAR 2 there is evidence on the work on General Elections, and the work with the Parliament, put together with the numerous convenings to discuss salient issues, have built up trust from the government and other civil society. As one Key Informant indicated, as long as there is a STAR, partners are able now to engage high level government officials, and also invite them to dialogue spaces where they know that they will not face antagonism but dialogue for understanding issues and change.

In essence, STAR-Ghana's credibility gets smaller CSOs to the high table. Better for policy-makers because they understand the reality on ground. Better for the smaller CSOs because they get heard by the people who have power to change things

This credibility has been built out of the way of doing things but also much more from the highly trusted Ghanaian Steering Committee members, and now Governing Council members. who

can rise up to face the Speaker of Parliament and anyone in government. Prof. Akilagpa Sawyerr for instance shared a story of bailing out a Grant Partner that approached parliament wrongly, when he went to appear himself in parliament and explain the situation.

### *The 3C's and L is a unique approach to supporting Civil Society for transformative change*

The kind of convenings that STAR Ghana is able to manage are unique in two ways: they are able to attract high calibre decision makers to them, and they are facilitated by the CSO or actor that is best placed to facilitate them, so that STAR Ghana is not the front of the discussion itself. They resource it and allow the specialised organisations on those issues to facilitate and hence not competing with them.

Suffice to indicate that the PEA approach is being piloted in six pilots as part of learning to embed PEA in the 3Cs and L. STAR Ghana, in working with ODI to develop a strategic approach from these pilots into how to systematically conduct embedded PEA as part of the 3Cs and L more widely. This will help the convenings for instance to attract not just a diverse group of actors, but also premise them on the understanding of their power and incentives.

### *A Capable Grant Making Body*

The reality is that one of the major causes for lack of collaboration and engagement capabilities of civil society in Ghana over the years, has been competition for access to funding. STAR Ghana has built up skills of making resources available to civil society while building their capacity to be accountable. The granting system has been arranged in such a way that there are a number of windows for accessing grants, including for non-traditional grantees such as Parliamentary Committees. This however has meant that Grant support costs have been high because of the level of scrutiny and transparency that has been embedded into the process. The Foundation will have to communicate the true costs of managing grants as part of its transparency to the different constituents that it will define.

The STAR team harnessed key lessons from STAR 1 about effective granting that is linked to what the programme has to achieve. They learnt that giving grants alone does not lead to transformational change. To achieve impact grant making must:

- Fit within a broader strategy of the programme in view;
- Be based on sound evidence, both in situation analysis and in understanding of how change happens;
- Incorporate strong evidence gathering to inform subsequent actions.
- Be looking to a sustainable post grants future phase.

To this effect, granting in STAR Ghana is a strategic combination of competitive and more 'managed' funding to reach and support a variety of stakeholders and to help address diverse issues. In this formulation, competitive funding is used to encourage applicants to deliver safe, lower-risk projects where results can be better assured though short term grants are not as suitable for established organisations such as IDEG, SEND Ghana, and CDD that instead prefer more longer term 'core funding' type support so they can work on their issues flexibly. The Foundation could relearn from G-RAP on this regard. Small, competitive grants are useful for delving into and learning about most of the issues that are new and sometimes being worked at by non-traditional actors. They then complement strategic grants that are normally used to tackle issues that are well researched, often with well-known organisations, so that STAR Ghana can manage to work effectively within the Ghana ecosystem.



## 6. Summary of Recommendations

### *For the Programme*

- a. STAR Ghana should develop a clear strategy for harnessing and aggregating successes at the individual organisation or theme level as a solid evidence for engaging government and other actors from local to national level.
- b. The issue selection process should concentrate on finding issues within issues through a lot more work being spent on drilling down on the first expression of issues and ultimately to the root systemic issues that are often hidden or otherwise pop up in different dimensions during implementation of projects. The argument is that unless there is a disciplined and PEA informed process of issue identification using the 3Cs and L, and embedded PEA, there will be attempts at tackling topical issues but not addressing the root causes of poor governance.
- c. The programme should think carefully about the relationship among the 3Cs and L, in theory of change terms so that the Convening, Coordination and Learning roles should be seen as strategies for Catalysing action. They are not all at the same level, as practice seems to show.
- d. The interviews emerged with the thinking that the reason convenings are often one off and not systematically following through some of the emerging issues through several iterations of convenings is that the programme is grants heavy, and hence delivering the programme took away time needed to embed the 3Cs and L approach among the staff as well as GPs. The Programme should rebalance time spent on providing grants and time spent deepening the 3C's and L
- e. Competitive funding is used to encourage applicants to deliver safe, lower-risk projects where results can be better assured. However, their short term nature makes these grants not as suitable for established organisations such as IDEG, Send Ghana, and CDD. These instead prefer more longer term 'core funding' type support so they can work on their issues with necessary flexibility.
- f. The two forms of PEA, the general and thematic, worked at the national level should be linked to what is being learnt from the partner level embedded PEAs. The partner embedded PEAs should use more qualitative approaches such as Outcome Mapping and Outcomes Harvesting to track the changes in key actor behaviours. Three tools are recommended to be used concurrently, AIIM, Outcome Mapping and Outcomes Harvesting. It is these tools, which when combined with the Log-Frame indicators can give a picture of the changes that are occurring with what context.
- g. In terms of the STAR Ghana theory of change and in view of the emerging SGF, the programme needs to use its proven CONVENING power, along with learning and collaboration/ coordination roles to catalyse change. In other words, work much more in improving the quality of convenings as a niche area for change (cf. recommendation 6.3)
- h. The national environment of Ghana as a middle-income country makes fundraising within the NGO circles difficult. The concept of Ghana beyond aid has compounded the situation as most donors now think Ghana can do it on her own and are cutting their funding levels.

Attracting private sector support is a bit challenging because engagement of professional bodies which Star Ghana wanted to stimulate under Star 1 did not go far. The SGF needs to develop a strategy for engaging with the Private Sector for both fundraising and as an active partner for change.

- i. The different approaches that STAR Ghana is using (PEA, Clustering, and Communities of Practice etc) can be used more strategically together in different combinations by locating them on different parts of the pathways on the STAR Ghana Theory of Change so that they are tested for effectiveness in terms of enhancing these pathways. This will also clarify their logical relationships.

### **Recommendations for DFID**

#### *Support the STAR Ghana Foundation to effectively build on the Accountable Grant*

6. A recurring feedback we got from stakeholders during key informant interviews about donor funded programmes was their lack of continuity when it mattered most. They cited work around corruption, G-RAP as some of such programmes which had gained momentum but ended abruptly due to changes in donor priorities and withdrawal of funding. DFID should encourage the SGF to use part of the £2.25 accountable grant to continue some of the work started under the programme by grant partners that have shown great progress.

#### *Policy Space for CSOs*

7. The adoption of an accountable grant for supporting the Foundation will not be the same the kind of funding arrangement that DFID has with the STAR Ghana programme, especially in terms of how DFID was indirectly also providing space for engaging government using the evidence from the programme. This space is likely to be lost at a time that Civil Society needs it the most because of the general global trend of closing civic space. Often times, donors have not distinguished the rise of a country to 'middle income status', which is often based on economic indicators and hence leading to donor withdrawals, from the nature of civic space. DFID should ensure that its support to the STAR Ghana Foundation using the accountable grant does not mean a disconnection with the Governing Council and the Foundation in terms of supporting or leveraging country engagements where necessary.

## **7. Towards the STAR Ghana Foundation**

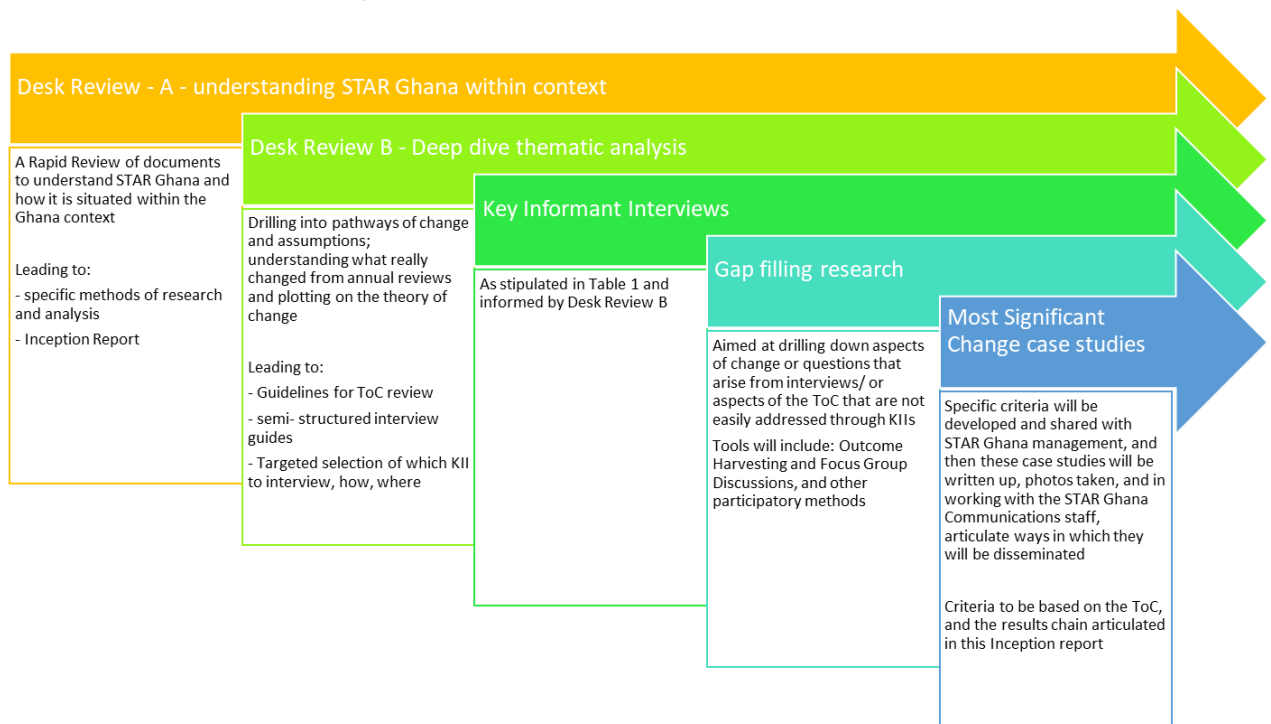
A detailed analysis of the key messages for the STAR Ghana Foundation is provided in the Strategic Messaging Paper. Suffice in this paper to note that it was the overwhelming view of all the stakeholders interviewed that Star Ghana has played an important role in the Ghanaian civil society space which the future Star Ghana Foundation must build on. The nature of the ecosystem in the future Ghana beyond aid will have a strong influence on what the Star Ghana Foundation can and should be doing and how. Looking into the future<sup>11</sup>, the key characteristics of the ecosystem which might impact what Star Ghana Foundation does include but not limited to:

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<sup>11</sup> Additional views are provided in Annex 3.

- A Ghana not dependent on external resources to finance their national development. Mobilization and utilization of domestic resources will be critical.
- The patterns of development finance may change rapidly and unpredictably because donor exit may neither be phased nor be predictable.
- Uncertainty about the role of development partners/suspicion
- Decreased brokering role between government and civil society because of diminished donor roles/influence
- Potential loss of protection against attempts to limit the activities of CSOs.
- Increased appetite to limit the space of civil society action through legislation.
- A politically polarized space dominated by two major political parties who struggle to control/dominate the media.
- Weak state institutions
- Governance challenges at all levels, increased corruption, widening poverty levels and inequalities.
- Increased fragmentation of civil society organizations aligned to, or influenced by, political parties.
- Culture of silence on the increase

## Annex 1: Methodology



## **Annex 2: Interview notes on the Stakeholder Views about the STAR Ghana Foundation**

### **a) Nature and Identity of the Star Ghana Foundation.**

Majority of the stakeholders felt that the Star Ghana Foundation must be a Ghanaian Organization, funded by Ghanaians with the right branding to attract the right resources from its citizens and build its legitimacy which it might not have if it is donor funded. Others expect the Star Ghana Foundation to continue to be politically neutral, be a force to reckon with, have a truly national character with a strong voice on critical national issues. A civil society movement that puts pressure on government and articulate Ghanaian values –like “Occupy Ghana”, explained further in 3.3 below.

Whereas these might be well considered and fits well in the Ghana beyond aid agenda, we think that the citizen culture of giving might not easily extend to funding the STAR Ghana Foundation. Also, the Foundation risks losing out on otherwise good external sources of funding which might be of strategic importance to the Foundation in its early life. In the past ten (10) years of its work, Star Ghana has been associated with donor funding but we did not find any evidence of it being unable to pursue an agenda that was important to Ghanaians, nor did we find any donor agenda influencing what Star Ghana did or planned doing.

A blended approach might be worth considering, where Star Ghana Foundation (SGF) is selective in the kind of funds it accesses in the short to medium term whilst building its capacity for the generation of funds from within. The strategic messaging developed as part of this independent review might be helpful in managing expectations and building the right brand and image for the Foundation.

### **b) Establish an Endowment Fund**

Related to the above, stakeholders strongly recommended the establishment of an endowment fund to continue to provide support to civil society organizations to maintain its legitimacy and reverence. Star Ghana’s support to civil society organizations was found to be helpful in building capacities and addressing the organizational development needs of civil society organizations. Whereas this is a good proposition, given the current nature of the Ghanaian environment in terms of giving, the initiative should not be rushed. We believe that with the right structures and mechanisms for sustainable fundraising and grant management, this is something that can be done towards the end of the first medium-term period of its existence. With the right Fundraising and Communication Strategy for example, the Foundation can leverage on the influence, credibility and integrity of the members of its Governing Council to achieve this objective.

### **c) STAR Ghana Foundation’s Niche and Strategy.**

From our interactions and review of programme documents, Star Ghana’s unique approach of supporting civil society within the ecosystem through the 3Cs and L at a big scale, emerged as its niche which no other civil society organization has, as discussed earlier. In addition, majority of the stakeholders expect the Star Ghana Foundation to address critical national issues such as corruption, provision of social/public services, good governance (especially local governance, increasing voice and accountability) and GESI.

Whereas these are important issues which could form the building blocks of a future strategy, we appreciate the dynamic nature of the ecosystem and the importance of a future Star Ghana

Foundation strategy addressing the issues that citizens really want. Also, tackling too many issues at the same time may lead to loss of focus, prove unwieldy and difficult to manage.

SGF should revisit its ethos and scan the environment in a more systematic manner to identify what citizens really want and build on it. Central to this strategy development process is the need for a decision to be made regarding the role of the Star Ghana Foundation as an implementor or facilitator. We think that finding a middle ground may be more relevant at the moment but should be reviewed with time.

#### **d) Review number of Grants to partners and Enforcement of Compliance**

From the review, we found that the provision of grants has proved to be an effective strategy of enabling civil society to carry out activities, build coalitions for change, operate within the available spaces and hence served as a tool for driving change. We note that the nature of grant partners has changed over time based on learning to include large and small civil society organizations as well as non-traditional partners such as the media. The practice of periodically reviewing the nature of partners and process of giving grants is a useful one and we recommend this to be continued.

At the time of the review, we found that there were over ninety (90) active grants and we wondered the value addition of having this rather big number of grantees of varying sizes and capacities. We acknowledge the feedback of partners that grants have played an important role in their effectiveness in delivering the salient issues they are addressing. If left on their own, some civil society organizations would never be able to access grants, so this space offered by Star Ghana has proved useful for the survival of such organizations.

This notwithstanding, it was also clear that the process was demanding and difficult to manage for Star Ghana. We think that a lot of time that could have been spent on making Star Ghana more effective was spent on monitoring and supporting grantees. We recommend a reflection on this to determine the right number of grantees. Perhaps a reduced programme scope might help in determining the optimum number of grantees required to deliver specific change objectives.

Grantees also differ in terms of their capacities and might require different strategies of supporting them whilst adhering to compliance requirements. We would encourage peer support and learning, phased capacity building and support mechanisms etc as some of the strategies the Foundation could consider for relatively weaker organizations rather than giving them direct support always. The former will ensure that the staff do not lose quality time whilst at the same time achieving the compliance standards required.