



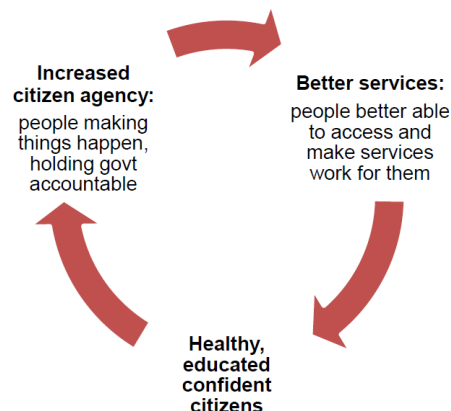
TWAVEZA - “We can make it happen”

Theory of Change and Approach

Exposed to the ferment of information, ideas, stories of change and practical tools, citizens across East Africa are making things happen, holding governments to account and improving lives. Twaweza gets behind these initiatives to make them gain greater momentum, fostering information flows and public action, building on what works, trying out new ideas, and learning, documenting and sharing lessons.

The statement above captures Twaweza’s theory of change, or how we seek to make a difference. It has three interlinked components that also constitute our main goals; namely, to enable millions of people in East Africa to a) access practical information that can spur the imagination; b) be able to exercise greater agency i.e. be able to improve their situations and to hold governments to account, and c) use information and agency to access improved basic education, basic health, and clean water.

In our conception, citizen agency is both an *end in itself and an effective means* to improve basic service delivery. When people are informed, equipped and inspired to act, they are able to exert more control over their lives, and negotiate better service delivery. In turn, both the experience of agency and better services contributes to making people healthier, better educated and more confident. We therefore see greater transparency and communication, enhanced citizen agency, and better services as dynamically connected and mutually reinforcing, and as the key drivers to attaining a better life.

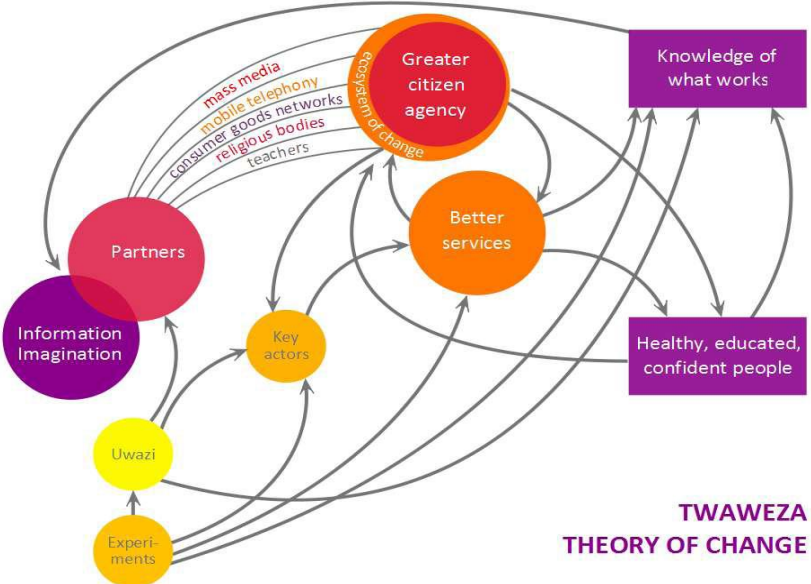


At core, Twaweza embodies the democratic ideal, implicit in its name, that *sustainable change is driven by the actions of motivated citizens*. In Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania it is increasingly clear that *public pressure and public debate are more effective drivers of change than expert or policy driven technocratic reforms*. For this reason Twaweza seeks to promote broad public engagement across East Africa, by creating spaces and opportunities for millions of ordinary people to compel governments to be more responsive and take initiative to improve their situation, which is expected over time to achieve a tipping point effect. At the same time, we recognize that citizen action in practice requires leadership and is made possible by organizing, and that not every person is likely to take initiative. So while we seek to make opportunity to engage widely, our expectation is that the first movers are likely to be the somewhat different or highly motivated outliers, and others may than follow through gradually expanding circles until a tipping point is achieved.

In every village and urban neighborhood, (extra) ordinary citizens who are analyzing, agitating, organizing, and acting to improve on issues of concern to them. Their actions are often a little different, out of the box, unusual or special – and what they do in small and large ways excites or inspires others. These citizen leaders may be teachers, local entrepreneurs, or members of a faith community or an informal savings association. They may be retired civil servants with solid reputations or teenagers out of school and out of a job with little to lose. Notably, in this approach, community level change agents are not ‘identified’ by Twaweza or its partners; rather an environment is created in which information, ideas and connections are enhanced – where actors ‘self-identify’ themselves, grab the opportunities they find compelling, and run with them. Over time a critical *ecosystem* of ideas and initiatives develops that inspires and enhance action.

Across East Africa, people are using information and agency to make things happen, demand accountability and solve problems. Often this happens in ways and places that are different from the expected models of formal development – through the channels and institutions that matter to people such as mobile telephony, media and religion, through informal networks rather than formal structures of governance, through improvising, adapting and hustling rather than making official requests and claims. Twaweza’s core idea is to get behind what is working and help it work better, fly higher and faster, for larger contexts and for more people. Twaweza does this through two main types of work: a) *program interventions* that support information to flow in a way that spurs the public imagination and citizen action and b) *learning* that seeks to rigorously document and evaluate what works and why, and use the lessons to improve our program and inform global knowledge.

The diagram below depicts the seven core components in our theory of change and the relationship between them. Each major component is described below.



1 Information types and imagination

Change often begins with information and ideas about a situation and what can be done, but some types of information can have more resonance than others. Typically, many development initiatives convey information about national laws and policies, about formal rights and official budgets, and about legal mechanisms of decision-making. But in contexts where the link between formal institutions and practice is tenuous, such as East Africa, this information can be impractical or irrelevant to getting things done. Moreover, too often information is aggregated to a level that makes little practical sense to citizens. Thus, information may have a limited effect not because it is

not important, but because the nature of the information provided is not useful.

Twaweza emphasizes the flow of two types of information as follows:

- Comparative information: It is in comparing that meaning is derived. So if one finds out that her school received \$5 per child, how does she make sense of it? Is \$5 too little? Too much? Enough? Unfair? It's difficult to know. But if she knew that the policy required it to be \$10, or that last year they only got \$2, or that the neighbouring school got \$20, or that \$500 was spent on the Head Teacher's new suit, then the \$5 could be seen in (a whole new) perspective. Understanding these differences can spur a debate about priorities and fairness, and what should be spent on what, which in turn can stimulate action.
- Stories of change: When things have not changed for a long time, and there is not much shared experience or history of people having acted successfully to make a difference, people may conclude that it is not within their prerogative or ability to change. This is where stories of how people who one can identify with were able to make a difference on a similar issue or situation can be very important – because it can allow people to imagine that change is possible and possibly within their power to do so. Here it is also important to see how people acted, what it took to succeed, how challenges were overcome, what the risks were and how they were managed.

With both types of information the key word is *imagination*, which exposes people to realms beyond established boundaries, to imagine new possibilities of action and fuel aspirations.

A key aim at Twaweza is to expand the means and options by which people can reliably access and communicate information that they care about; and to enhance the ways by which people can generate, store, communicate and debate their own analyses and stories, and find larger audiences. In this conception Twaweza is a source of information at times, but more often it is an engaged broker, enabling ideas to flow between key actors, program partners and citizens.

Particular attention is placed on creating real opportunities and a level playing field for historically excluded or marginalized people, such as poor women, young people, and people with disabilities. Emphasis is placed on making information transparent and popularizing information and tools to be relevant, user-friendly and to resonate with ordinary citizens. These include the use of visuals and oral communication, and expanding the menu of options for action available so that people are able to select what they are most comfortable with.

2 Information flows and partnerships

Typically one begins with groups that profess a desire to do development and democracy, and then struggle to expand reach or scale achieved. Instead, we start at the end with the entities that are already reaching people and work backwards, i.e. we sort out the distribution challenge, and then work with brokering content. How? Twaweza works with the key institutions and leaders that already have a substantive reach (with wide distribution networks that 'touch' large numbers of people), even where their stated purposes are not 'developmental'. As noted in the situation analysis, we have identified five such networks as particularly critical: mobile telephony, mass media (radio, TV and newspapers), commercial goods distribution networks (such as for laundry soap, sugar and flour), religions (Islamic associations and churches), and teachers and their trades' unions. Additionally, music and popular culture is increasingly a powerful network that matters to millions of young people in particular.

Twaweza supports partnerships and initiatives that foster *direct engagement* with citizens, rather than making the strengthening of intermediary organizations as our main goal. We primarily partner with the key networks that reach millions of citizens; in addition we also engage with CSOs that are able to facilitate citizen involvement at large scale, or that can provide analytical or other critical input to the overall ecosystem effort. Multiple means are explored, because a strategy that is wholly

dependent on one entity can suffer from the limitations of organizational reach and culture, as well as elite capture.

The focus on citizen driven action does not mean that Twaweza works in isolation or apart from government. Rather, Twaweza partners enable citizens to reclaim government and animate public institutions, and over time to help develop a new, more responsive 'compact' between citizens and the state. Its demand-side focus is designed to complement and revitalize the many supply-sided governance reforms underway in East Africa supported by the World Bank, UNDP, DFID, Sida and others. In this way Twaweza concentrates on the larger gap and our comparative advantage, and avoids duplicating work done by other programs.

3 Ecosystem effect and citizen agency

The sum effect of the information flows through multiple partnerships and pathways creates a critical density of mutually reinforcing and growing set of reference points – of facts, stories and ideas – in communities across East Africa. This in turn fosters a growing set of options, motivation and reference points for citizen action and change. Over time, this leads to citizens having a greater sense of what's going on within and outside their communities, about how things can be different, and how to make a difference – a greater menu of options. It's less about having engaged certain citizens in carefully planned projects, and more about expanding the practical and cognitive boundaries of what can be imagined and what can be done. This is what we call an *ecosystem of information, ideas and change*.

An expanded menu of options reinforces public action that can help achieve a tipping point faster. Instead of only two teachers monitoring water points, you may have four groups doing the same thing; instead of only one data point to back up your story you now may have three. It also provides the benefits of diversification; should talking on the radio not work for me I can still organize through my prayer group; if women cannot be reached through mobile phone SMSs, they still could through fast moving consumer goods. And should the authorities clamp down on one channel, such as ban newspapers, the ecosystem provides alternative means by which information can still flow. Twaweza envisages four main forms of citizen agency, which are analytically distinct but in practice connected and iterative. These are:

- **Uptake of information:** Information and ideas can be accessible, but uptake is a more active engagement. It implies that the information makes sense, is relevant and perceived to be of use. Essential for its success is that the content and presentation piques curiosity.
- **Monitoring what's going on:** People usually know a lot about their circumstances; by monitoring we mean a systematic collection of information that can be verified and allow for comparison. Citizens are equipped with ideas and tools that allow monitoring first for own analysis, debate and benefit, and secondly as part of a larger usually national monitoring activity. This often takes the form of comparing actual practice with policies or budgets, or comparisons over time and areas.
- **Speaking up and debating:** Citizens are exercising voice and speaking up in a public space so that others can hear; this need not be and often is not a formal or official space. This most often happens in the local level; in addition citizens at times speak up to address larger audiences, through media, internet, travel and other forums, and possibly inform national policy processes.
- **Taking action to make a difference:** The three forms of agency above are also actions; this involves citizens taking initiative to make a concrete difference in specific circumstances, such as governance arrangements, allocation of funds, accountability of service providers, or using time and labor to get something done.

4 Improving service delivery

Public service delivery in East Africa is in a poor state. Several factors contribute to this state of affairs, including large structural and financial constraints. But others may be due to information asymmetries, weak feedback and accountability loops, and poorly structured incentives that do not reward care and performance. Some of these constraints can be solved, as studies across the world have shown, through improved information access and better coordination that can prompt individual and collective action. This may involve direct encounter with providers, such as being treated with respect and in a timely manner by a health worker, or the long route of engaging at the policy and management levels.

The critical hypothesis in Twaweza's theory of change is that informed and aware citizens will be better able to negotiate terms and entitlements in relation to service delivery, and resort to recourse when services fail. We further hypothesize that senior public servants and MPs are more likely to respond to concerted citizen pressure than technical evidence alone.

5 Experimental interventions

While Twaweza has emphasized the value of experimentation from the outset, the use of carefully designed, randomized control experiments (RCTs) has recently been added as a third component of our program. RCT methodology seeks to isolate, with careful sampling and rigor, the drivers of certain impacts and the confidence to which attribution can be made. Drawing on the methodology used to test the efficacy of new medicines, its basic approach is to pair similar communities and undertake interventions in one half and leave the other half as is (the counterfactual).

RCTs are not appropriate for much of Twaweza's core programs because of the varying, multiple interventions we promote in an (uncontrolled) open architecture approach, where it is difficult to isolate and differentiate certain actions. But for testing the impacts of specific interventions RCTs can be very helpful. For instance, to improve learning outcomes in lower primary grades, which interventions are the most effective? Is it training teachers in school? Pay teachers incentives? Change the curriculum? Do more examinations? Improve bonuses?

Thus whereas Twaweza's core programs can help spread ideas widely, an RCT can inform it of what is likely to work well.

6 Uwazi: making sense of data and analysis

Uwazi seeks to 'liberate' data and information so as to better inform public discussion. It enables key actors to have access to timely, reliable, relevant and easy to understand information and analyses which enhance public debate and accountability, and that contribute to citizen agency and action.

Uwazi serves two primary audiences. First, Uwazi provides information and analytical support to Twaweza's partners. Second, Uwazi serves to better inform key actors in society whose actions have a significant influence on public wellbeing, who in turn may be more inclined to respond to the evidence due to the pressure from below.

7 Learning and evaluation

From the outset, Twaweza has been just as much about learning as it is about program interventions. The core idea is that we develop a culture of curiosity and learning among staff and partners, and continually reflect and learn, and bring the lessons to bear back into our work and public engagement, as well as contribute to global knowledge. The lessons and insights we generate are expected to inform program effectiveness, and shed insight on key questions in development, such as the relationship between information and agency, and between transparency and accountability, and how these can trigger improvements in service delivery.