

# Introduction to SAVI's way of working

## Achieving results

SAVI is achieving significant results:

- State governments are facilitating citizen involvement in some planning, budgeting or monitoring processes in all the states where SAVI works.
- There are tangible examples of state government action in response to citizen demand in all target states.
- State Houses of Assembly, civil society groups, and/or media houses are demonstrating increased effectiveness as agents of citizen change in all target states.
- Some of the above processes are beginning to take on a life of their own.

## Innovative approach

We are achieving these results through an innovative programme approach:

- **Goal:** we aim to build sustainable, replicable and influential processes of citizen engagement in governance which make a difference to peoples' lives – *more than one-off examples of government responsiveness.*
- **Partners:** we work equally with citizens, civil society partnerships, media organisations and State Houses of Assembly as agents of citizen voice – *not only with Civil Society Organisations.*
- **Support to partners:** we broker and facilitate working relationships amongst partners and between partners and state governments, and provide hands-on mentoring, capacity-building, and seed funding support – *rather than calling for proposals and providing accountable grants.*
- **Staffing:** we establish and train in-house state teams to facilitate locally driven change – identifying issues, engaging partners and providing behind the scenes support – *rather than contracting external training providers.*
- **Political economy:** we support staff and partners to analyse their local political economy and use this understanding to inform their decision-making – *rather than contracting political economy analysis to political scientists.*
- **Complementary programmes:** we are part of a suite of DFID-funded demand- and supply-side programmes facilitating citizen engagement with governance processes – *we don't support citizen demand in isolation from wider processes of reform.*

## SAVI Approach Papers

SAVI Approach Papers summarise key aspects of SAVI's way of working. They explain what we do, and why and link to relevant tools and frameworks.

### Our core approach

#### SAVI Approach Paper 1. Core Values: focussing on attitude and behaviour change

Governance reform is about government and citizens working together in more responsive, inclusive and accountable ways for the benefit of citizens. More responsive, inclusive and accountable *attitudes and behaviour* on the part of government and non-government stakeholders are the critical factors which lead to meaningful reform processes, and replicate and sustain reforms beyond the lifetime of development programmes. In supporting this kind of attitude and behaviour change, we have learned the power and importance of 'practising what we preach'. Core values, demonstrated in agreed attitudes and behaviour, form the essential heart of everything SAVI does. These reflect and reinforce the behind-the-scenes role programme staff play in facilitating locally-driven change.

#### SAVI Approach Paper 2. Programme Design: a facilitated partnership approach to supporting citizen engagement in governance

SAVI supports citizen engagement in governance through a facilitated partnership approach, in contrast to the usual approach of grants to civil society organisations (CSOs). The overall aim is to facilitate and support working relationships and processes of reform that are home-grown, self-sustaining and, after initial engagement, not dependent on external support. Our way of working resonates well with current influential debates on 'thinking and working politically' and 'doing development differently'.

In-house teams of SAVI staff in each state, drawn from a mixture of government, civil society, media and State House of Assembly (SHoA) backgrounds, play a hands-on, behind-the-scenes role facilitating locally-driven change. They help to foster improved understanding and better working relationships between citizens, civil society (CS) groups, media organisations, SHoA and government actors around issues of mutual concern and key democratic processes.

SAVI staff support local partners through brokering relationships, mentoring on thinking and working politically, technical support and complementary seed funding. They work closely with sister DFID-funded programmes and other development partners working on governance and sector reform in the same states. SAVI partners have complete flexibility to determine their own priorities and activities, as well as the kind of tailor-made assistance and mentoring they require.

#### SAVI Approach Paper 3. Theory of Change: empowering citizens to engage in governance

SAVI's theory of change is a simple, practical guide that staff and partners use to plan and to monitor change – as well as to reflect on and enhance their own effectiveness. It sets out broad stages of attitude and behaviour change over time to facilitate effective citizen engagement in governance processes, systems and structures. It serves as a guide for staff, partners and citizens to think and work politically, primarily through the formation of strategic alliances and partnerships. Its content is consistent with research conclusions about what works in practice in promoting more responsive and accountable governance. The stages of the theory of change provide the basic framework for all SAVI's programme planning, monitoring, and reporting.

#### SAVI Approach Paper 4. Thinking and Working Politically: supporting partners and staff through a participatory approach to political economy analysis

Thinking and acting politically is central to the SAVI programme. We support staff and partners to analyse the power relations that shape change in their state, and to use this knowledge to inform their decision-making. This includes decisions made by SAVI state teams relating to the issues and partners they engage with and support, and the alliances and partnerships they help to facilitate. It also includes decisions made by partners on ways to advance government responsiveness on their issues and processes of concern.

Partners are encouraged to start their ambitions and activities small and go to scale gradually. They use flexible and adaptive approaches, learn from experience, and gradually build their confidence, credibility and networks – resulting in higher ambitions and higher impact over time.

This applied approach to political economy analysis is rigorous at the same time as being accessible, engaging and effective. It results in politically smart thinking becoming normal and central to the day to day planning and action of staff and partners.



## **SAVI Approach Paper 5. Defining and Measuring Results: monitoring incremental change over time**

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

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

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

## **Relationships with partners**

### **SAVI Approach Paper 6. Engaging Civil Society**

SAVI state teams provide support to CS groups (very broadly defined to include not only formal CSOs, but non-government individuals and groups including academics, trade unions, retired civil servants, faith groups and private sector stakeholders) to become more effective agents of citizens' voice and public accountability, through a variety of mutually reinforcing interventions. These include:

- hands-on support to demonstration civil society issues-based Advocacy Partnerships (APs)
- facilitating working partnerships between APs, SHoAs, and the media
- brokering working relationships between all of these non government actors and the state government
- facilitation at a more strategic level of a better enabling environment for citizen engagement in responsive state governance

These initiatives demonstrate to local actors, through experience, ways of working that help citizens to influence state government action, and help state governments to be more responsive, inclusive and accountable to their citizens. The overall aim is to promote working relationships and processes of reform that are home-grown, self-sustaining and not dependent on external support.

### **SAVI Approach Paper 7. Promoting Gender Equality and Social Inclusion**

We promote attention to gender equality and social inclusion in all of our engagement with APs, the media and SHoAs, and in all of the issues and processes they work on. In all the states we work in, we also support partners to focus on some issues and form some partnerships and networks which specifically concern women, girls and excluded groups.

Respect and inclusion are among SAVI's core values. Senior management and staff are strongly committed to gender equality and social inclusion and ensure this is reflected in all aspects of the programme. Attention to gender and inclusion is explicit across all levels of the SAVI results framework, and enshrined in the programme's operations manual and all staff terms of reference.

We recognise that change towards greater social equality will be incremental and long-term, and that the challenges are immense. We value and celebrate small incremental changes in individuals and organisations when they occur – demonstrations of attitudes and behaviour that promote inclusion and greater equality. We recognise the huge significance of partners' own organisations and state governments themselves taking the initiative to promote aspects of social equality and embed this commitment within their own systems and structures.



### **SAVI Approach Paper 8. Engaging the Media**

The overall aim of SAVI engagement with the media is for media representation of citizens' interests to become normal, and play its part in helping state governments to be more responsive, inclusive and accountable to their citizens.

Media partners – individual media personnel and selected media houses – are supported to be more effective agents of citizens' voice and public accountability, through a variety of mutually reinforcing interventions. These include hands-on support to selected media partners; involvement of media personnel in advocacy partnerships; and strategic facilitation of improved working relations between government and non-government actors, involving the media as a critical and central player.

These interventions illustrate to the media, through practical experience, ways in which they can step up to their constitutional role to give voice to citizens and hold government to account. They also demonstrate ways of doing this that are locally led, politically smart and can be sustained without the need for external funding.

### **SAVI Approach Paper 9. Engaging State Houses of Assembly**

The overall aim of SAVI engagement with SHoAs is to promote lasting reforms that are not dependent on external funding and which promote an increasingly more responsive and accountable relationship between Nigerian state governments and their citizens. SHoAs are supported to be more effective agents of citizen voice and public accountability, demanding better performance from the executive arm of state government on behalf of citizens and holding the executive to account. Our support is designed to:

- facilitate SHoAs independence from State Executives
- build linkages between elected members and citizens
- strengthen members' skills and systems in budget analysis and oversight
- broker and support complementary work and working relationships between elected members and media and civil society groups representing citizens' interests.

We focus our support on issues and processes that elected members themselves prioritise and drive forward, and in which they invest their own resources.

### **SAVI Approach Paper 10. Engaging State Governments**

SAVI as a programme does not directly work with state governments – but we work in close conjunction with sister programmes who are supporting state governments on governance and sector reforms. SAVI supports non-government and SHoA partners to play their part in promoting more responsive, inclusive and accountable state governance delivering better services for citizens.

Our focus is on constructive engagement. Through demonstration initiatives, we support non-government and SHoA partners to represent citizens in the state; build on existing commitment to reform in the state government; develop good working relationships with government staff; make informed and practical contributions to state government policy, planning and budgeting processes; and serve as a valuable and valued partner to the state government. These initiatives demonstrate, through experience, ways of working that help the state government be more responsive, inclusive and accountable to state citizens.

The overall aim is to facilitate and support working relationships and processes of reform that are home-grown, self-sustaining and, after initial demonstration, self-replicating without need of external support.

# SAVI's 'knowledge tree'

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

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

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

For more information, visit our website: [www.savi-nigeria.org/approach](http://www.savi-nigeria.org/approach)



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

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