How Change Happens

Resources for developing a theory of change

resources

The Community Builder's Approach to the Theory of Change: A Practical Guide to Theory Development, Andrea A. Anderson, Ph.D., The Aspen Institute, Roundtable on Community Change
A comprehensive guide to facilitating a process to develop a Theory of Change for community organizations.
http://www.aspeninstitute.org/sites/default/files/content/docs/rcc/rcccommbuildersapproach.pdf

Theory of Change, Guided Example: Project Superwoman, ActKnowledge and Aspen Institute Roundtable on Community Change.
An example of a theory of change for a community development capacity building project, which shows the development of the theory, and illustrates key principles.
http://www.theoryofchange.org/pdf/Superwomen_Example.pdf

How Change Happens - Context

context

In order to be effective as public engagement practitioners, we need opportunities to reflect on our work and think about the underlying theories and assumptions on which we base our actions. The tools and resources that follow are designed to encourage practitioners to think about how change happens as a result of public engagement, and to help them apply that understanding to the work of their organizations. We hope that organizations in our sector will use our theory of change model to reflect on their own assumptions about how change happens, and ultimately that they will undertake to develop, or adapt, a theory of change to inform their work.

Definition of Public Engagement

The following was developed as a working definition of public engagement for the ICN project. It is not meant to be a prescriptive or conclusive definition, but rather, a definition that helps contextualize the approach and understanding of public engagement for this project, in this moment in time.

Public engagement is the practice of inspiring, supporting and challenging people and groups in dynamic cycles of learning, reflection and action on global issues. Public engagement is a transformative process that works towards more equitable social, economic, environmental and political structures.

Transformational vs. transactional engagement

> "We need to shift the balance of NGO public engagement activities away from 'transactions' and towards 'transformations'. This means placing less emphasis on '£5 buys...' appeals and simple campaigning actions, and more emphasis on providing supporters with opportunities to engage increasingly deeply over time through a 'supporter journey'."
> -Finding Frames, Page 10

Over the past few decades there have been pressures on public engagement that have led to an increased adoption of transactional, rather than transformational, methods. We believe that the purpose of public engagement is transformational change: it should create long-term, sustainable change within individuals, groups and societies.

Transactional engagement seeks to lower or eliminate barriers to entry and calls for actions that are broad-based, easy and fast – such as a small donation via a text message, or signing an online petition. While these methods can be an important and often vital part of public engagement, we don't believe that transactional methods alone will ultimately lead to the change we seek. In fact, some argue that they can be counter-productive for creating lasting change (Finding Frames, 6).

Transformational engagement seeks to implicate individuals and groups in dynamic cycles of learning, reflection and action on global issues. This process requires spaces for deeper engagement and methods that foster longer-term participation. Techniques for transformational engagement might include learning circles, experiential learning (local or global), or deliberative dialogue to work through complex issues, among many others.

As argued in a discussion paper commissioned by CCIC:

> "Generating change in global systems cannot happen exclusively through awareness raising. . . . More and more, [civil society organizations] of the South are telling their northern counterparts that the best way they can support development is by catalyzing changed attitudes and practices in the North and to entrust them with their own local development efforts. Public engagement needs to be holistic in its approach and include all of the actions leading to social change that citizens can take and this includes advocacy" ("Public Engagement in Challenging Times: The Context, Implications, and Possible Directions", 18).

Public engagement is work that is never complete, and changes as we change, as our organizations change and as our societies change.

The 'How Change Happens' knowledge hub explored the explicit and implicit messages of our public engagement work. Our sector has had many conversations about the conflicting paradigms of justice on the one hand (the idea that development is a process of addressing inequities in social, economic, environmental and political structures, for the betterment of all) and charity on the other (the idea that development is a gift from the North to the South), and how they are both reflected in our messaging. The Finding Frames report looks at how the public in the UK understands global poverty through a frame of charity even when practitioners try to frame their message as one based in justice:

> "The causes of poverty are seen as internal to poor countries: famine, war, natural disasters, bad governance, overpopulation and so on. The dominant paradigm has been labelled the Live Aid Legacy, characterised by the relationship of 'Powerful Giver' and 'Grateful Receiver.' Public perceptions have been stuck in this frame for 25 years" (Finding Frames 6).

The report demonstrates that the UK public is mostly unable to identify the ways in which their own behaviour and that of their government perpetuate inequality. Additionally, they hold onto the paradigm of "Us vs. Them" and perceive any solution as being tied to the charity model (20). We see many parallels between the UK report and the public engagement environment in Canada.

Lynette Shultz, Associate Professor of Education Policy Studies, identifies another dominant paradigm in public engagement practice in Canada: that of the "empowered individual" ("Public Engagement and Educating for Global Citizenship: What do we risk by focusing on "the Empowered Individual"?", 3), a person in the developed world who has the power to make positive change. On first glance, this paradigm appears different than that of the "Powerful Giver" and "Grateful Receiver." However, this paradigm does not change the relationship between the giver and receiver, but, rather, shifts the frame to focus only on the "giver" – the empowered individual – thus de-legitimizing collective action, and shutting out voices from the Global South.

We are left with the question of how we can re-frame our public engagement work in order to help Canadians understand themselves and their roles differently, and emphasize the values of cooperation, equality and justice that we believe are integral to our work. We hope that the tools in this module will provide opportunities for practitioners to reflect on and share their own understandings of how to help Canadians engage in transformative change.

Make time and space for critical reflection

good practices

Many of us are doing public engagement with very limited time and resources. That means we sometimes don't have enough space as practitioners to think critically about how we do our work, and how we could do it better.

Our colleagues who work on development projects overseas often have very good evaluative practices with clearly defined opportunities for reflection and debriefing, and strategies for incorporating learnings into their practice. Our public engagement work should be allotted those same opportunities for reflection.

During those reflections, we also need to ask the hard questions – not just whether people participated in or enjoyed our interventions, but what change resulted. What understandings did they walk away with? What actions are they likely to take? What change will occur in five years? What was the impact of our work? Who was impacted and how?

Use a theory of change to plan and reflect

good practices

A theory of change maps out a pathway of change or a change framework towards a long-term goal. The process of developing a theory of change for an organization can help practitioners identify gaps in the interventions they have planned, and identify when an intervention is unlikely to lead to an expected result.

Develop a personal or organizational theory of change, and revisit it regularly as part of planning and evaluation. Test out your theory of change. Evaluate your program outcomes against your theory. Do your assumptions about how change happens hold up, or do they need to be revised?

The "How Change Happens" Knowledge Hub developed a [model theory of change](#), which looks at how our work as a sector can and should contribute to our desired outcomes. We invite you to use or adapt our model theory of change to evaluate your public engagement activities and see how your work fits into the bigger picture of public engagement, so you can identify gaps and clarify assumptions. Try doing this together with other organizations, to see how your work fits together and identify points of collaboration.

Be explicit about your values and principles

good practices

Sometimes – unlike people working in international development projects overseas – we are working without clearly established principles. Having clear principles can help guide us in our decision-making, and stop us from inadvertently doing things that work against our long term goals.

Over the last decade or so, civil society organizations from all across the world have worked on a set of principles to guide development effectiveness, called the [Istanbul Principles for CSO Development Effectiveness](#). Many of our organizations are now working to adopt these principles for their own development practice.

It is an important exercise to think about how these principles might impact our practice of public engagement. Take time to consider how your organization's public engagement activities reflect internationally accepted principles of development effectiveness.

Some of these principles might be challenging for our practice of public engagement. For example, the principle "Practice Transparency and Accountability" is not often considered in the work of public engagement. To whom are we accountable in our public engagement work? To our donors? To our Southern partners? To our target audiences? Where in the planning process of public engagement can we consider our values and principles?

Practice looking at your work through an anti-oppressive lens

good practices

Use an anti-oppressive lens to think about the design and content of your public engagement interventions. Using an anti-oppressive lens means acknowledging differences in power and privilege and working to understand how those differences shape our ideas and relationships. Practitioners might consider gender, race, class, ability/disability, sexual orientation and other aspects of identity in the design and content of their public engagement efforts.

Help reframe development

good practices

Much of the public understands development as a question of charity – the idea that "we" (developed countries/the global north) need to give more to "them" (developing countries/the Global South). This has been described as the paradigm of the "generous giver / deficient receiver." Many of our organizations have worked extensively to show how this paradigm is harmful to positive social change (for example, The South through the Northern Eye).

The *Finding Frames: New Ways to Engage the UK Public in Global Poverty* report (developed by Andrew Darnton with Martin Kirk) explores how sometimes even when public engagement campaigns aim to send a different message – for instance, the Make Poverty History Campaign, which tried to look at poverty as an issue of political policy and trade justice – the public received the message as one of charitable giving. They call this the "Live Aid Legacy," reflecting our tendency, and that of the public, to receive messages about global poverty through the "frame" of what we already understand.

The report's authors challenge us to think about how our use of some of the tools of these early campaigns – eg: celebrity endorsements, benefit concerts – can re-activate this frame, and sometimes reinforce values that are the opposite of those which lead to positive social change.

Lynette Shultz explores how recent shifts in public engagement practice have made the dynamic of the "deficient recipient" less visible, but questions whether the new paradigm of the "empowered individual" has sufficiently changed the power relations in our work.

The Finding Frames report proposes that our sector look for ways to reinforce values such as universalism, cooperation and social justice in the way we plan and present our public engagement programs.

As practitioners, we might imagine alternative frames such as collective action towards common goals or honouring leadership from the Global South and understanding our role as one of solidarity.

For some organizations, our public engagement work connects closely with work in fundraising and communications. Sometimes, the messages that we think are very important in public engagement may not be the most effective messages for short-term goals like fundraising or communications. For this reason, it is critical to work within your organization to help align public engagement, communications and fundraising, or at least to minimize the potential for mixed messaging.

Create spaces for deeper engagement

good practices

It is clear that the kind of work that we need to do is not superficial, and means enduring changes in our attitudes and perspectives, as well as our skills. It is hard work that requires us to take risks. Some have noted that in the past several decades many Canadians participated in transformative learning through their unions and faith-based groups. These spaces are becoming less central in many people's lives, and have not yet been replaced by other spaces where deeper conversations and transformative experiences can happen.

We need to find a balance between this transformative, in-depth level of engagement and dialogue and the briefer, large scale engagement that will often serve as entry points for people. Both are essential in our public engagement.

However, sometimes the paths that people can take from our short-term engagements into deeper engagements are not clear. Think about how your public engagement can build or support the spaces and opportunities for deeper engagement that are necessary for transformative change. One of the key lessons is that not all of us need to do everything. Some organizations may be stronger in organizing short-term, broad-based engagements, and others in more intensive engagements. How do we work together?

Global Hive's Theory of Change

tools

> "The integrity of public engagement work is strengthened by grounding its design in a Theory of Change."

> –Public Engagement in Challenging Times: The Context, Implications and Possible Directions, p. 18)

The theory of change is presented as a Prezi, and can be accessed here:

Public Engagement: A Theory of change (A work in progress)

A theory of change is a tool for helping us examine and clarify our understandings of how our actions as organizations lead to change. The process of developing a theory of change helps us to confront and refine our assumptions about how change happens.

The following theory of change is designed as a tool to inspire reflection in our sector. It encompasses the work of many different organizations that are working together for a more just and sustainable world. It is a work in progress and is intended to capture a moment in time – not a definitive or static model. If you are familiar with theories of change, you may notice that this model differs in some ways from most others. For example, because we were looking at the public engagement sector as a whole, we did not develop specific indicators as part of the model. Instead of guiding specific program planning, we hope this tool can inspire conversations about how our public engagement work collectively leads to social change.

We understand public engagement as a transformational process – one that leads to societal change, rather than a transactional one – one that leads to increased fundraising dollars, or more social media followers. Although transactional engagement may be part of public engagement, this model views that engagement as a small piece – perhaps a starting point – in a larger process of transformational engagement. In order for transformational change to happen, public engagement must create authentic space for citizen and communal participation. As public engagement practitioners, we must also expect that the process will change us, too.

Many theories of change represent that change as a linear process. This model is designed to be understood as dynamic and cyclical. We want to recognize that being engaged is a lifelong process, which it is never complete, and that people's engagement shifts over time. People jump, or loop, within the cycle from one area to another; there are unique periods of learning, growth, stagnancy and rest within the journey of each individual, organization or society.

This tool will allow public engagement practitioners to see a broad view of the large process of societal change and identify how they fit into the cycle. It is a model where organizations may work exclusively within one or several spheres of change, and that not all organizations need to work at all levels. We believe that important work happens in each circle, and hope that this gives us an opportunity to reflect on how the different approaches of organizations in our sector interact and complement each other – for example, how the work of educating youth connects to organizations that aim at engaging voters in policy-level work. We also hope that this will allow us to uncover assumptions or gaps where our work is failing to connect.

As practitioners work through the model theory of change, we encourage you to use an anti-oppressive lens to think about the design and content of your interventions. Using an anti-oppressive lens means acknowledging differences in power and privilege and working to understand how those differences shape our ideas and relationships.

Practitioners might consider gender, race, class, ability/disability, sexual orientation and other aspects of identity in asking questions like:

- Who are your interventions targeting?
- What assumptions are we making about those we are targeting?
- Whose voices do we hear through our engagement?

Also, in the Tool,we have identified questions that practitioners can use as inspiration, but these questions are in no way complete, and each should lead to further questions.

How to develop a theory of change

tools

Adapted from The Community Builder's Approach to Theory of Change: A Practical Guide to Theory Development, *The Aspen Institute, Roundtable on Community Change*

A Theory of Change maps our understanding of how social change happens along a pathway, thereby helping us envision the steps necessary for reaching our long-term goal or goals. Having a Theory of Change can help us to plan interventions that support the change we desire, and can also help us avoid mistakes in implementation.

There are, according to *The Community Builder's Approach to the Theory of Change* , four basic components to a Theory of Change:

1. A **pathway of change** that illustrates the relationship between a variety of outcomes that are each thought of as preconditions of the long-term goal.
2. **Indicators** that are specific enough that tracking them will help us to measure success.
3. **Interventions** that will be used to bring about each of the preconditions on the pathway, and at each step of the pathway.
4. **Assumptions** that explain the key guiding assumptions that tie the theory together.

Developing a theory of change for public engagement can be difficult, as sometimes our long-term outcomes, and the preconditions for achieving them, can be difficult to measure (for instance, changes in people's perceptions of the world). For this reason, it is especially important to articulate our goals clearly and think about how our activities and program support them.

Task 1: Identify the Long-Term Outcome

It's important to begin with a clear understanding of what the desired long-term outcome of our work is. Often, we take for granted that we are all working towards similar goals, but you might be surprised to find that people working on the same project may have different ideas about the long-term outcomes. The long-term outcome needs to be specific – having a "mega-goal" (like "make the world a better place") is not specific enough for a Theory of Change.

Task 2: Develop a Pathway of Change

The next step is developing the pathway of **results** which lead backwards from the long-term outcome. This can be the most time-consuming part of the process. The pathway should not yet address your activities or interventions, but show the **results** or changes in state that are necessary before the long-term outcome can be achieved. You might think of these things as prerequisites, ingredients or building blocks of change. It can be very helpful to do "backwards mapping" by starting at the end, and working backwards.

Task 3: Operationalize Outcomes

The next step is to develop indicators for knowing when or how your outcomes are achieved. For each result or outcome, we should ask, "What evidence will we have that this has been achieved?" It's important that we use indicators that really reflect what we are trying to achieve, not just what data we have access to. [More information on indicators can be found in "P: Define the scope of your activities and identify the target audience", and Aspen Centre's *A Community Builder's Approach to a Theory of Change.*

Task 4: Define Interventions

Participants should next think about what activities and programs they can plan in order to support each outcome. Note that usually one "mega-program" cannot address all of the outcomes, and different interventions may be required for different outcomes.

This step should not involve detailed program-planning, but identifying in broad strokes what activities or interventions can support the development of the indicators.

Task 5: Articulate Assumptions

Finally, participants should think about unspoken assumptions that have influenced their planning. For example, why do I believe x is necessary for y? Why do I believe that x will lead to y? These may surface during other steps in the process, and you can collect them to discuss in this final step.

Note that a Theory of Change is always a work in progress. Testing, revisiting, re-evaluating and re-thinking are what give the Theory of Change its power. Building the indicators into your evaluation framework and process of data collection will help ensure you have the information to assess whether the Theory works in practice and/or how it can be revised.

Reflection questions on how change happens

context

1. How do you see the work of your organization fitting into the theory of change? Which spheres does your work connect with?
2. Does your organization have a theory of change for public engagement programming? If you were to develop one, what would it look like?
3. Is the work you are doing focusing in on a transactional model of change or a transformational model of change? What are the pros and cons of each model for your organization?
4. What type of messages and narrative do you try to communicate to your constituents? What message or narrative do you think they are hearing?
5. How open are we, as a sector, to critical thinking and analysis in public engagement? Are we prepared to change our models of engagement?

Applying the Istanbul Principles to public engagement

tools

Context

The Istanbul Principles for Development Effectiveness are a set of internationally recognized standards developed by the [Global Assembly of the Open Forum for CSO Development Effectiveness](), a diverse coalition of civil society organizations from around the world. The principles were created through a process of extensive global consultations in 2010 and 2011 which involved civil society organizations in more than 50 countries. The principles represent a shift from a paradigm of "aid effectiveness" – which focuses on the effective delivery of aid, to the exclusion of issues fundamental to development – to one of "development effectiveness" – which focuses on how civil society organizations can work effectively for sustainable development. This paradigm shift parallels a similar shift in public engagement work from transactional to transformational engagement.

The Principles are:

1. Respect and promote human rights and social justice.
2. Embody gender equality and equity while promoting women's and girls' rights
3. Focus on people's empowerment, democratic ownership and participation
4. Promote Environmental Sustainability
5. Practice transparency and accountability
6. Pursue equitable partnerships and solidarity
7. Create and share knowledge and commit to mutual learning
8. Commit to realizing positive sustainable change

Since they were endorsed at the first Global Assembly of the Open Forum in September 2010, many organizations have begun to implement the Istanbul Principles in their development work. While a lot of thinking has gone into applying the principles to development work, practitioners are just beginning to consider implications of the principles for public engagement work. This tool can provide a starting point for discussion within your organization about how your public engagement approaches reflect these principles.

More information about the Istanbul Principles for Development Effectiveness can be found on [the Open Forum for CSO Development Effectiveness website]().

Questions for Practitioners

These questions were developed as a tool to assist organizations as they reflect on the challenge of incorporating the lessons of the Istanbul Principles into their own public engagement programs. Some questions address the messages and goals of our public engagement work (what are we talking about, what solutions are we presenting, what is the "ask"), while others address the ways that we engage the public (who are we targeting, how are they engaged and involved).

Overarching questions:

- Have we as public engagement practitioners articulated values or principles for our public engagement practice?
- Is our public engagement work integrated with our development work? How?
- How are these values communicated through your public engagement?

Istanbul Principle #1. Respect and promote human rights and social justice.

Civil society organizations are effective as development actors when they... develop and implement strategies, activities and practices that promote individual and collective human rights, including the right to development, with dignity, decent work, social justice and equity for all people.

Questions for public engagement practitioners:

- Does our public engagement work emphasize the rights of people?
- Does the way we conduct our public engagement activities foster equity within our communities?

Istanbul Principle #2. Embody gender equality and equity while promoting women's and girls' rights

Civil society organizations are effective as development actors when they… promote and practice development cooperation embodying gender equity, reflecting women's concerns and experience, while supporting women's efforts to realize their individual and collective rights, participating as fully empowered actors in the development process.

Questions for public engagement practitioners:

- Does our public engagement work address issues that are priorities for women?
- Are women's voices heard through our public engagement work? Are they shown as leaders in development? Are both women and men presented as expert voices?
- Are we engaging both men and women? Do their roles in our public engagement differ?

Istanbul Principle #3. Focus on people's empowerment, democratic ownership and participation

Civil society organizations are effective as development actors when they … support the empowerment and inclusive participation of people to expand their democratic ownership over policies and development initiatives that affect their lives, with an emphasis on the poor and marginalized.

Questions for public engagement practitioners:

- Do we engage people in a participatory way?
- How are the priorities of our public engagement work set? Who is involved in the process?
- How are we building democratic ownership and participation through our public engagement?

Istanbul Principle #4. Promote Environmental Sustainability

Civil society organizations are effective as development actors when they… develop and implement priorities and approaches that promote environmental sustainability for present and future generations, including urgent responses to climate crises, with specific attention to the socio-economic, cultural and indigenous conditions for ecological integrity and justice.

Questions for public engagement practitioners:

- What are we doing to ensure that environmental sustainability is a key message of our public engagement?
- How are we modeling environmental sustainability through our public engagement activities?

Istanbul Principle #5. Practice transparency and accountability

Civil society organizations are effective as development actors when they… demonstrate a sustained organizational commitment to transparency, multiple accountability, and integrity in their internal operations.

Questions for public engagement practitioners:

- To whom are we accountable? To our donors? To people in the Global South? To our partners? To our funders?
- How do we act on this accountability?
- Are the results of our public engagement work made transparent? How do we share messages that we receive from the groups we engage?

Istanbul Principle #6. Pursue equitable partnerships and solidarity

Civil society organizations are effective as development actors when they… commit to transparent relationships with civil society organizations and other development actors, freely and as equals, based on shared development goals and values, mutual respect, trust, organizational autonomy, long-term accompaniment, solidarity and global citizenship.

Questions for public engagement practitioners:

- How do we support our Southern partners through our public engagement programming?

- How do Southern partners influence our public engagement? Does our public engagement live up to our partnership principles?
- How does our public engagement work build mutual respect and solidarity?

Istanbul Principle #7. Create and share knowledge and commit to mutual learning

Civil society organizations are effective as development actors when they … enhance the ways they learn from their experience, from other civil society organizations and development actors, integrating evidence from development practice and results, including the knowledge and wisdom of local and indigenous communities, strengthening innovation and their vision for the future they would like to see.

Questions for public engagement practitioners:

- How do we collaborate with other civil society organizations and development actors in our public engagement?
- How do we share our learnings and incorporate the experiences of others into our public engagement activities?
- How do we engage in mutual learning from a North-South perspective in our public engagement work?

Istanbul Principle #8. Commit to realizing positive sustainable change

Civil society organizations are effective as development actors when they … collaborate to realize sustainable outcomes and impacts of their development actions, focusing on results and conditions for lasting change for people, with special emphasis on poor and marginalized populations, ensuring an enduring legacy for present and future generations.

Questions for public engagement practitioners:

- How does our public engagement promote critical thinking and analysis of root causes?
- What are the results of our public engagement programming? Changes in awareness? Attitudes and perceptions? Capacity? Behaviour?
- How do those results contribute to long-term sustainable change?

Applying our theory of change to fair trade procurement

case studies

The following is a reflection on and application of the theory of change *developed by the How Change Happens Knowledge Hub.*

Fair Trade Manitoba, a program of the Manitoba Council for International Cooperation (MCIC), works with various institutions, including local and provincial governments, schools, and crown corporations, as they discover, consider, plan for, and take action on fair trade procurement and policies. Over the past five years we have worked with approximately 15 groups that are engaged in different ways and have differing levels of commitment with the fair trade movement.

For some organizations and individuals, the concept of fair trade and the connection with Fair Trade Manitoba are quite new, and they come to us seeking information (**point of entry**). For other organizations, green or social procurement is already accepted as part of their mandate, and key individuals within their institution are taking leadership to move from intention to action. We try our best to connect with organizations that are in the process of exploring these options to ensure that fair trade is considered as a way that they can live out that mandate.

The process of changing practices and policies with regard to fair trade is a slow one, often taking months or years. A common challenge is finding a way to move fair trade from a "back-burner" issue to a "front-burner" issue.

Fair Trade Manitoba's role is to try to help people make emotional connections with the issues through live presentations (**personal change**); build relationships and connect organizations to allies and brokers (**relational change**); and assist with face-to-face meetings with decision makers (**societal change**). Often this means just patiently keeping in contact.

Some organizations will change their practices because of the work of specific individuals with a strong belief in the philosophy of fair trade. This is a point where our work builds on the work of other organizations who have helped these individuals become active global citizens (**active global citizenship**). Others struggle with concerns about budget, doubts about fair trade's credibility, and the idea of imposing a policy that is seen to restrict purchasing decisions.

Ultimately we believe the organizations that implement procedures and policies are contributing to more sustainable futures for producers (**outcomes**).

Questions for reflection:

- What steps can we take to encourage those who are struggling with budget, credibility and "imposing" a policy, to help them see the big picture?
- Does this type of policy change make a difference to the individuals within the organization? Does it engage them in a cycle of transformation, or is change only happening within the key decision makers

- What interventions are the most effective?

Applying our theory of change to an experiential youth exchange program

case studies

By Bequie Lake

The following is a reflection on and application of the theory of change developed by the How Change Happens Knowledge Hub.

This case study explores how the Theory of Change can be used as a tool to identify assumptions and gaps in our public engagement interventions. I worked with a volunteer program that engages young Canadians in learning about international development and related issues.

Through the program, the young people learn a lot about issues affecting communities in Canada and other countries. They also develop skills like critical thinking and personal reflection through group educational activities, and debriefing their experiences with the supervisors and other participants (**personal change**). They work for six months on a cross-cultural team, so they get better at working cross-culturally and making decisions with groups (**relational change**). Many develop an understanding of power and privilege that helps them to understand their choices more critically (**active global citizenship**).

The program doesn't usually engage directly with making change to structures (**societal change**), because it is a relatively short-term engagement. The philosophy of many people who work in the program is that the youth who finish it will go on to do work at the societal level. While anecdotally, this is often true, it is not always easy to demonstrate how big a role their participation in the program played in influencing those choices.

Questions for reflection:

- Does helping young people to develop skills, knowledge and attitudes lead to longer-term engagement in work at the societal level?
- Are there interventions needed to make a bridge from the personal and relational change to societal change?

Transaction vs. transformation in a large humanitarian organization

case studies

Lessons can always be learned from public engagement work on development issues. The following case study specifically explores a malaria prevention program and the interconnections between public engagement, public relations, and fundraising.

The malaria prevention program took place in over twelve countries in Africa in a collaborative process that engaged local educators and humanitarian volunteers, regional and national health authorities, as well as international aid organizations. On the ground, the focus was on prevention and capacity building. Over seven million nets were distributed to families with young children. The dissemination process included training almost thirty thousand local volunteers to facilitate community-based prevention education and to support effective use of the nets. In many communities the malaria program included vaccination campaigns and training for health professionals in rural areas to administer medical treatment.

While the malaria prevention program was a comprehensive partnership between communities, humanitarian organizations and governments, the Canadian public engagement around this program focused on a transactional style of engagement, encouraging Canadians to 'buy a net and save a life'. Millions of nets were purchased through online and in-person fundraising initiatives (**points of engagement**). The fundraising focus of the Canadian portion provided little context on the spread or impact of malaria, nor were additional opportunities for engagement facilitated. Despite raising significant funds to support the malaria program, when national and international funding ceased, so did Canadian engagement.

Questions for engagement:

- How can we move from transactional points of engagement to personal, relational or societal engagement?
- Is it possible to run a campaign which has both transactional and transformational goals? How can fund-raising and public engagement work together?
- What are the potential risks of focusing solely on transactional points of entry?

Deliberative dialogue

case studies

Dialogue is a different way of engaging. It is about creating meaning together, thinking about issues in new ways and exploring and building common ground. Deliberative dialogue goes further and asks people to make choices by weighing competing values and priorities, by thinking through pros and cons, and by determining acceptable trade-offs. It is a cornerstone of participatory democracy, where citizens can collectively work through the tough issues facing their community or society and build robust skills for citizenship that go far beyond showing up at the ballot box every four years.

At its best, deliberative dialogue can nourish **personal, relational and social change**. For example, in a recent process, citizens came together to deliberate on climate change, identify solutions and provide advice to municipal decision-makers in ways that could impact policy and program. To complete this rather daunting mandate, citizens had to explore their own assumptions and values – about climate change, about the economy, about government, about citizenship – and find common ground. Randomly selected, they came into the room with a diversity of viewpoints. They listened to presentations from various perspectives and asked questions. They thought critically about the issue. And they began to really listen to each other and explore ideas together. This broke down the stereotypes they held of one another. It created new understanding and insights that the group used to find common ground on values and principles from which they could provide their best advice to decision-makers.

But deliberative dialogue poses challenges for our sector's work. When citizens come together to think about tough societal issues, there is no guarantee that they will arrive at the same solutions as we might as NGOs. It requires letting go of the outcomes of the dialogue, which can come into conflict with our campaigning work. We also know that dialogue doesn't necessarily lead to action – individually or collectively - and when it does, it may go in a different direction than envisioned by us as NGOs.

Reflection questions:

- How can we use deliberative dialogue to better collaborate with each other and with other stakeholders?
- Can we accept that citizens can make good judgments, even when they are different from our proposed solutions?
- How can we bridge dialogue and action? (Or do we need to?) Who defines the action?
- How can we bring citizen perspectives to policy and decision-makers?