BILATERAL DONORS AND CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS:

TECHNOLOGIES FOR LEARNING AND ACCOUNTABILITY

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In memory of:

Professor Gary MacIntyre Boyd

1934 – 2011

If I am not for myself, who is for me? And if I am only for myself, what am I? And if not now, when? (Perkei Avot, Chapter 1. 14).

Declaration of Authorship

I, Caitlin Bentley hereby declare that this thesis and the work presented in it is entirely my own. Where I have consulted the work of others, this is always clearly stated.

Signed: _____

Date: _____

ABSTRACT

This thesis explores learning and accountability processes within and between bilateral donors and civil society organisations (CSOs). Its purpose is to examine how and why Information and Communications Technologies (ICTs) contribute to learning and accountability processes. The research examines ICT practice in two case studies of development aid relationships. The methodology allows a holistic and critical examination of the intentions and reflections of various actors, namely donor and CSO staff, within development aid relationships, an approach which is relatively rare in research in this field. These investigations were conducted using a participatory and critical ethnographic approach combined with process modelling interviews. Case study participants were donors and CSOs based in Canada, Southern Africa, Togo and the United Kingdom.

Many theorists of the information society argue that ICTs are immanently poised to transform power structures and to expand opportunities for participation and collaboration in development processes. Instead of pointing to the potential positive impact of ICTs, my research shows a tendency for ICTs (or a lack thereof) to reinforce existing power hierarchies and organisational structures. Key debates within learning and accountability literatures focus on the need to make development processes inclusive and self-governing. This thesis contributes to these debates by generating insight into the socio-technical interactions between learning, accountability and ICT, and suggests future areas of research and practice in this area.

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ABBREVIATIONS

ADSL – Asymmetric Digital Subscriber Line

CAF – Female Learning Centre, Vogan, Togo

CEO – Chief Executive Officer

COE – Centre of Excellence

COO – Chief Operations Officer

CMS – Content Management System

CSO – Civil society organisation

DAC – Development Assistance Committee

DFID – Department for International Development, UK

GAC – Global Affairs Canada

HQ – Headquarters

IATI – International Aid Transparency Initiative

ICT – Information and Communications Technology

IMF – International Monetary Fund

KBPS – Kilobytes per second

MOU – Memorandum of Understanding

OECD – Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development

PPA – DFID's Partnership Programme Arrangement

PROVONAT – National Volunteering Programme in Togo

SALP – DFID's Southern African Learning Partnership

SSM – Soft Systems Methodology

URL – Uniform Resource Locator

WiFi – Wireless Internet network

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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

I have this weird impression and I don't even know if it's true. Through [technology] alone, it wasn't enough, but as part of an approach that intended to bring people together for knowledge sharing… and influencing each other, I think it played a very important role. I can't really pinpoint and say that for sure technology… Well, I really feel that it was a big part of it. I don't think it would have worked without it… (Former Regional Director, Crossroads, November 28, 2011).

From 2007 to 2010, I was employed by Crossroads International, a Canadian civil society organisation (CSO), coordinating a project to enhance online inter-organisational collaboration amongst 17 West African CSOs. Over the course of the project, Crossroads and their partners realised that Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) alone did not influence the way collaboration is done (Bentley, 2011). Just as the Director's quotation above hints, a great deal of support and guidance is required to change existing practices. Yet, at the same time, he could not pinpoint what it was about ICTs that made them so important, or why new learning opportunities were not possible without them.

In 2008, when I travelled in West Africa to evaluate the project, CSO directors all reported having difficulty finding the time to dedicate to the collaboration activities,

even if they believed that they could have direct benefits to improve their programmes (Bentley, 2009; 2011). Partners reported being over-worked and over-burdened when managing and reporting their activities to growing numbers of donors (Bentley, 2009). They identified the time spent recycling the same information in different formats to various donors, each with their own reporting mechanisms, as wasted time. I was convinced that there must be a way for CSOs both to fulfil their accountability requirements, and to support learning for practitioners by taking advantage of new ICTs. This research is premised on my desire to understand why ICTs are not making the expected transformations in learning and accountability processes (Bentley, 2011).

This research has two principal aims: 1) to identify how and why bilateral donors and CSOs use ICTs to manage accountability processes both internally and externally; and 2) to illuminate how and why ICTs support learning for these actors in the context of accountability. Whilst there is no clear consensus on what accountability and learning mean, or how they should operate, both accountability and learning are important to the delivery of effective development programmes (OECD, 2001; Roper and Pettit, 2002; Ebrahim, 2005). Accountability is key, as it is concerned with the conduct of actors, and their duty to be *answerable* for their actions (Coleman, 1985; Roberts and Scapens, 1985; Schedler, 1999). It is also not neutral, as it is shaped by the power and position of actors (Sinclair, 1995; Abrahams, 2008). Learning is essential to accountability as systemic feedback (Ebrahim, 2005; Gigler *et al.*, 2014); but, learning is not neutral either as it is contingent on the accountability mechanisms and ideologies at play (Biggs and Smith, 2003; Ebrahim, 2003b; Eyben, 2005). Such complexity in the circumstances underpinning learning and accountability greatly affect how and why bilateral donors and CSOs use ICTs for learning and accountability purposes.

To reduce complexity, I focus on the intersection of ICT, learning and accountability to resolve two systemic problems currently limiting CSO-donor relations and their development contributions. The first is a *relationship accountability problem* that stems from the perpetual power imbalance between donors and CSOs (Edwards and Hulme, 1995; Ebrahim, 2003b). Funding relationships skew power and control over resources towards donors (Edwards and Hulme, 1995). The second is a *representation accountability problem* which sees donors and CSOs prioritising their own interests ahead of the needs and wants of poor and marginalised people (Chambers, 1997; Koch, Dreher, Nunnenkamp and Thiele, 2008).

The relationship problem stems from the wide implementation of results-based managerial practices originally intended as a means of making public-sector institutions more efficient (Hood, 1995; Eyben, 2013). This has significantly impacted CSO practices (Wallace, 1999), and is a topic of debate in CSO development discourses (Edwards and Hulme, 1995; Cutt and Murray, 2000; Kilby, 2006). There is evidence that aid allocation by CSOs is increasingly aligned with the interests of their donors, many of whom do not always prioritise the genuine development needs of marginalised communities (Koch *et al.*, 2008). Donors may also overpower CSOs by causing them to focus attention on their reporting obligations, rather than focusing on delivering the intended outcomes (Ebrahim, 2003b). This interplay between donors, who want assurance that their contributions are being well invested because they must answer to their stakeholders and justify their spending decisions, and CSOs, who are also concerned about demonstrating results to private and public donors, has significantly affected CSO activities. My research investigates how ICTs contribute in this context.

The second problem is the representation problem. CSOs have historically played critical roles in shaping bottom-up, innovative and alternative approaches to

development, albeit not without criticism (Clark, 2003; Bebbington, Hickey and Mitlin, 2008; Lewis and Kanji, 2009). CSOs established themselves, from as early as the 1960s, as important actors within development by challenging the role of governments and the way that development was done (Howell and Pearce, 2001; Van Rooy, 2009). The legitimacy of CSOs was arguably a function of their proximity to poor and marginalised populations (Kilby, 2006; Peruzzotti, 2006; Andrews, 2014). However, this legitimacy came under increasing scrutiny when funding relationships between donors and CSOs became commonplace in the 1980s, and blue-print approaches, with clear cause and effect assumptions to development were normalised (Easterly, 2006). If CSO practitioners spend more time making plans, and delimiting indicators of progress towards a logical progression, they have less time to spend with the people they intend to support, and this in turn creates more distance between them (Wallace, 1999; Wallace and Porter, 2013). CSOs may also select communities to work with that are likely to produce certain kinds of results in a short timespan rather than working with those in greatest need, who may prioritise other results requiring longer timescales (Bebbington, 2005). A representation problem emerges when CSOs gain funding due to their access to poor and marginalised populations, but then do not prioritise their needs. My research investigates how ICTs contribute to CSO practice in this regard.

The use of ICT both in engaging poor and marginalised populations, and in supporting relationships between donors and CSOs is especially tenuous in certain areas of the world. ICTs offer enormous transformative potential to radically change the context of development (Brewer *et al.*, 2005; Thompson, 2008; Sadowsky, 2012). In reality, ICTs are sources and indicators of exclusion and inequality (Mansell and Wehn, 1998; Hilbert, 2014; World Bank, 2016). Severe geographical and socio-economic disparities in terms of access and use are well-documented (Mansell,

2002; Kleine and Unwin, 2009; Hilbert, 2014). Private, corporate actors are gaining power and revealing pervasive inequalities in ICT production processes (Caribou Digital, 2016; World Bank, 2016). Such differences have yielded increasing ICT inequalities in terms of the ways that ICTs are constructed and used by different populations, and how related skills and knowledge are fostered through ICT channels (Hilbert, 2014). It is essential to understand how different ICT conditions structure learning and accountability processes between donors, CSOs and their beneficiaries.

Much of the research on ICT in development tries to understand technology adoption factors (Zainudeen and Ratnadiwakara, 2011; Janssen, Charalabidis and Zuiderwijk, 2012; Dahiru, Bass and Allison, 2014), without critically assessing the roles of ICTs in wider organisational and development processes (Heeks and Stanforth, 2015). There is surprisingly little empirical evidence of organisational ICT use amongst donor and CSO institutions (Powell, Davies and Taylor, 2012). An important assumption in such work is that organisations can take advantage of ICTs without much consideration for the institutional changes or power shifts required. Likewise, ICTs increase existing social and economic divides, by privileging knowledge and communication of dominant cultures and languages (Powell, 2006; Hilbert, 2014). This exacerbates rather than mitigates unequal power relations. Closing this gap between the seeming potential of ICTs on the one hand, and the reality of their impact on the other is not clear-cut. My research offers a rigorous assessment of both the positive and the negative possibilities for learning and accountability outcomes.

1.1   Research question and thesis structure

Donors and CSOs are key actors in development, especially as significant sources of support for poor and marginalised people. However, as outlined above, two major

problems are currently causing controversy regarding funding relationships between donors and CSOs. 1) The *relationship accountability problem*, caused by dominant funding relationship practices, which interferes with a CSO's capacity to act independently. 2) Widespread and systemic interference calls into question the capacity of CSOs to prioritise the interests of poor and marginalised people inclusively, which has created the *representation accountability problem*. This thesis critically examines the potential for ICTs to contribute to learning and accountability processes to resolve these problems in relationships between donors and CSOs. The central research question of the thesis is:

How and why do ICTs contribute to learning and accountability in relationships between donors and CSOs, and in CSO practice?

The next chapter presents the conceptual framework that is used to engage with this research question. Chapter 2 therefore outlines what is meant by accountability and learning in the thesis. To provide clarity and focus, two angles of investigation are incorporated; the *instrumental* uses of ICT for learning and accountability examine the intentional ways ICTs contribute, and the *fundamental* contributions of ICTs to learning and accountability. This entails exploring situated ICT practices to understand how and why ICTs structure meaning and contexts where learning and accountability take place. The research integrates participatory and ethnographic methods in a multiple case study design of two development aid relationships, the details of which are presented below. In Chapter 3, justification for the critical interpretive approach taken is provided, and the multiple case study research design is presented. Details are likewise given of the events which constrained the selection of the research sites and methods. The thesis is structured by case study, outlined in Figure 1-1, and explained below.

Figure 1-1 Thesis structure

Chapter 1
Resolving the relationship and representation accountability problems in CSO development aid relationships through ICT

Chapter 2
Accountability, learning and ICTs: situated, critical perspectives

Chapter 3
Understanding the role of ICT in accountability and learning

Case Study 1

Chapter 4
Institutional contexts of donors and CSOs

Chapter 5
Instrumental uses

Chapter 6
Situated ICT practices in context

Case Study 2

Chapter 7
Key differences between the case study donors and CSOs

Chapter 8
The problematic nature of ICT inequality

Chapter 9
The instrumental role of volunteers in shaping learning and accountability

Instrumental contributions

Fundamental contributions

Chapter 10
Cross-case analysis and conclusions
How and why do ICTs contribute to learning and accountability?

Source: Author.

Case study 1: Gender Links and DFID's Governance and Transparency Fund includes three empirical chapters. Chapter 4 introduces the actors, Gender Links, a regional Southern African CSO and recipient of the UK's Department for International Development (DFID) Governance and Transparency Fund. This chapter also situates their views of ICT, learning and accountability in context. Chapters 5 and 6 are the analytical chapters that present the results of this case study. Chapter 5 analyses the instrumental uses of ICT for learning and accountability from donor, CSO and

individual perspectives. Chapter 6 explores the fundamental contributions of ICT for learning and accountability. The findings are primarily drawn from first-hand accounts of donor and CSO staff and shed light on the different knowledge interests that drove the actors to build ICT systems to support these interests.

Case Study 2: La Colombe, Crossroads International and Global Affairs Canada also includes three empirical chapters. The second case draws out insight unique to this case, but also compares with the DFID-Gender Links case study. Chapter 7 establishes the main differences in the relationship, and learning and accountability approaches of the actors. La Colombe, Togo, is a small rural CSO partnered with a Canadian CSO, Crossroads. As a volunteer sending organisation, Crossroads is a recipient of the Volunteer Cooperation Programme of Global Affairs Canada (GAC). Chapter 8 therefore focuses on the primary fundamental difference, which was the severe ICT inequality experienced between the actors. Chapter 9 then explores the key role of volunteers to shape the instrumental uses of learning and accountability through ICT in this case.

The final chapter draws together the findings to build our understanding of the contributions of ICT to learning and accountability. This cross-case analysis is represented in Figure 1-1 by the purple and blue coloured arrows. Parts of the conceptual framework are taken up throughout the chapters across the case studies. These parts are then brought back together and reflected upon in the conclusion chapter. The conclusion argues for a significant conceptual shift in the roles and responsibilities that donors and CSOs have in relation to ICTs. It also outlines practical implications and future research recommendations, along with the limitations of the research.

Chapter 2

CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS AND BILATERAL DONORS: RESOLVING THE RELATIONSHIP AND REPRESENTATION PROBLEMS THROUGH ICTS?

This research takes a critical (Orlikowski and Baroudi, 1991; Stahl, 2008) and socially-embedded (Walsham, 1993; Avgerou, 2001; Avgerou, Ciborra and Land, 2004) approach to understanding the contributions of ICTs to learning and accountability processes in the research contexts. According to Avgerou (2010), ICTs are intrinsically tied to the meanings that actors attach to them. This means that actors make sense of, and adapt to ICTs in a situated manner, which in turn shapes the meaning of ICTs (Orlikowski, 1992; Avgerou, 2001). Theories that explain wider social and organisational systems and processes are therefore needed to understand ICTs (Avgerou, Ciborra and Land, 2004). This chapter presents a theoretical grounding for understanding the relationships between ICTs, learning and accountability in the context of bilateral donors and CSOs. The chapter also discusses the implications of different meanings and purposes of learning and accountability in this context. I begin by introducing the inherent complexities of defining CSOs and donors. I then establish two accountability perspectives as the basis for my analytical framework. These accountability perspectives are later expanded to explore how accountability, learning and ICT intersect in the context of the relationships that exist between donors, CSOs and their beneficiaries.

Solving the relationship and representation problems (Chapter 1) requires more than understanding how actors and technologies influence each other in learning and accountability processes. Challenging the status quo entails a rigorous examination of the restrictive and dominating conditions caused by ICT as a means to identify a positive way forward (Orlikowski and Baroudi, 1991). The last part of the chapter explains the conceptual approaches to understanding the structural aspects of ICTs in this context.

2.1 Defining the actors: bilateral donors and CSOs

A greater diversity of actors have gained prominence within the development aid system in recent years (Clarke, 1998; Mawdsley, 2012). Severino and Ray (2010) argued that diverse actors that are different in size, reach, goals and structure contribute to development, and each has different understandings of, and motivations for doing development. Yet, they must work together for progress to be made. This thesis concentrates on two groups of development aid actors, bilateral donors and CSOs, who are themselves heterogeneous groups. This section outlines the boundaries of these groups, whilst greater details concerning the roles and practices of the actors will be added throughout the remainder of the chapter.

The first group of actors are CSOs. CSOs are constantly changing, being redefined and redefining themselves (Fisher, 1997; Matthews, 1997; Pearce and Eade, 2000). Carothers (1999) emphasised that CSO can refer to community-based organisations (CBOs), Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), Grassroots Organisations (GROs), Third Sector Organisations (TSOs), labour unions, faith-based organisations, professional associations, and charitable foundations. Any organisation that exists within the associational space and outside of government

and market, and that has within its purpose some intended desire to contribute to positive social change is therefore included. CSOs can have multiple roles and make contributions to social change in different ways all at once (Brandsen, van de Donk and Putters, 2005; Van Rooy, 2009; Billis, 2010). However, positive social change is complex, and there are no clear-cut methods to achieve it (Simon and Närman, 1999; Ramalingam, 2013). Corruption and competing interests may also stand in the way of positive social change (Ben-Ner and Gui, 2003; Williams, 2010). My research builds on the understanding that CSOs have multiple roles, structures and functions. Yet there is also reason to be critical of their contributions, however these may be defined (Howell and Pearce, 2001).

The second group of actors are bilateral donors, who are a distinct category because they abide by rules and regulations that have been set in place by their government legislation and international agreements (Hyden and Mukandala, 1999). I shorten *bilateral donors* to *donors* for the sake of succinctness in the thesis and I will always use the term multilateral, foundation and private donors in full to differentiate these from bilateral donors. Donor institutions must balance often-conflicting requirements from their own government and citizens with the needs and requests of recipient nations, and are influenced by other donor institutions and multilateral organisations such as the United Nations (UN), the World Bank, and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) (Hyden and Mukandala, 1999; Browne, 2006; McMichael, 2007). This thesis mainly examines the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) Development Assistance Committee (DAC) donors, first because of volume (over 130 billion USD in 2015). DAC donor budgets are still some of the largest in the world, although Hammad and Morten (2009) suggest that non-DAC donors like China, India, and Arab countries, as well as private philanthropic foundations, are paralleling and sometimes surpassing DAC

donor budgets. Moreover, Mawdsley (2012) has argued that the use of the terms DAC and non-DAC perpetuates the dominant positioning of the DAC donors whilst potentially neglecting the alternative ideologies and modalities of development aid that non-DAC donors have contributed. Although I do not wish to contribute to such a perpetuation, I also needed to consider that the CSOs that I encountered in my research are mainly receiving funds from donors within the DAC.

Development studies literatures often present both groups of actors as black boxes, treating individuals and institutions within each group as equivalent, and as though actors within each group are afforded the same rights and responsibilities (Edwards, 1994; Marcussen, 1996; Roberts, Jones and Fröhling, 2005). Yet, within each group there are significant differences and asymmetries, and within institutions, many of the social relations between individuals are unequal (Chambers, 1997). It is vital to problematise accountability to accommodate the differences within and between the groups. The next two sections explain two different perspectives on accountability that provide the underlying structure to my analytical framework.

2.2 The situated aspects of accountability

Funding relationships between CSOs and donors are a central concern in accountability discourses (Wallace, 1999; Ebrahim, 2003b; Hulme and Edwards, 2013). There are, though, other accountability concerns. Within development, and in relationships between donors and CSOs specifically, the burgeoning neo-liberal agendas of the 1980s led to organisational *performance*, *efficiency*, and *effectiveness* becoming characteristic accountability objectives (Jordan and van Tuijl, 2006). Accountability is not a neutral concept, and is exploited by specific actors to serve social and political interests (Sinclair, 1995; Gray, Bebbington and Collison, 2006; Abrahams, 2008). Specifically, the literature on development CSOs has

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presented a sober analysis of power and authority in development aid relationships (Watkins, Swidler and Hannan, 2012; Hulme and Edwards, 2013). Situated aspects of accountability, such as the interaction between contexts, power and relationships of the actors are difficult to reconcile. This section outlines these difficulties, and positions my research within debates that contextualise accountability. I draw out three categories of accountability properties: individual, institutional and relationship. These define the situated aspects that are examined in my research in relation to ICTs.

2.2.1   Relationship accountability properties

One of the main difficulties in CSO accountability theory and practice is the *principal agent* framing of relationships (Ebrahim, 2007; Williams, 2010; Watkins, Swidler and Hannan, 2012). The principal agent model of accountability, with roots in law (Dowrick, 1954; Munday, 2010), economics (Jensen and Meckling, 1976; Hart and Holmstrom, 1987), accountancy (Baiman, 1990; Koford and Penno, 1992), and other social sciences (Eisenhardt, 1989; Shapiro, 2005), define how the actions and motivations of an *agent* both affect, and are controlled by, the interests of a *principal*. Jensen and Meckling (1976) argued that agents have incentives to maximise their own interests, and that principals need to induce measures to ensure that their own interests are also met. Applying this concept to the development sector, a principal is typically an actor that has commissioned an agent to produce *outputs* or *impact* (Watkins, Swidler and Hannan, 2012). The principal-agent problem has long been observed in relationships between donors and CSOs (Pratt, Adams and Warren, 2006; Williams, 2010; Dhanani and Connolly, 2014). CSOs have selectively shared information with donors as a means to maintain control over their own interests (Ebrahim, 2003b; Dhanani and Connolly, 2014). Likewise, CSOs have an incentive to

frame their work using buzzwords, and to propose projects that address donor priority topics in order to get funding (Cornwall, 2007; Koch *et al.*, 2008). Donors seek to control known problems as a means to protect CSO-agents from external negative influences (Hyden and Mukandala, 1999; Watkins, Swidler and Hannan, 2012). They have also introduced rigid rules and financial controls to resolve problems important to their institutions (Hyden and Mukandala, 1999). Whilst the principal-agent problem describes what happens between donors and CSOs, it fails to convey the whole story, or to offer a clear solution to it.

Examining accountability processes in context provides a more accurate picture of what actually happens (Unerman and O'Dwyer, 2006; Lewis, 2007). Development programmes can involve many partners and organisations, not just a principal and an agent. International CSOs may act as brokers (Van Rooy, 2000; Townsend and Townsend, 2004), by channelling and distributing funds to a host of partners in developing countries who implement programmes and interact directly with beneficiaries. Likewise, many donors are directly funding CSOs in developing countries (Giffen and Judge, 2010). This creates additional barriers to communication, due to language, distance and cultural differences. As plans and agreements permeate development aid channels, any number of interests and communication problems, introduced by a variety of actors, blur accountability lines between principals and agents. It is therefore unrealistic to depend on one CSO-agent for all the information. Accountability, then, is not only structured by one relationship but by a system of relations that CSOs have with their members, supporters, funders and beneficiaries (Ebrahim, 2007). I refer to the ways in which relationships structure accountability processes as *relationship accountability properties*. These properties create significant tensions between an organisation's

relationship accountability practices, and their internal accountability practices (Antlöv, Ibrahim and van Tuijl, 2006; Unerman and O'Dwyer, 2006).

2.2.2   Institutional accountability properties

Numerous approaches towards understanding and addressing tensions between the internal and external accountability processes have been suggested (Najam, 1996; Blagescu, Las Casas and Lloyd, 2005; David, Mancini and Guijt, 2006; Cavill and Sohail, 2007). Within organisations, both objective and situated approaches to accountability have been prominent. Objective approaches have defined specific forms of accountability to enable managerial oversight, or to create standards for external organisational assessment (Leat, 1988; Kumar, 1996; Koppell, 2005; Cavill and Sohail, 2007). A situated approach, however, implies a much more fundamental and integrated view of accountability within organisations (Roberts, 1991; Bovens, 1998; Messner, 2009). Contributing to the literature exploring accountability objectively, Leat (1988) defined three forms of accountability:

- *Accountability with sanctions,* which denotes the legal and fiscal obligations organisations have, including formal accountability requirements to funders;

- *Explanatory accountability,* which outlines the duty organisations have to explain their actions in official and informal ways to the public and/or their stakeholders; and

- *Responsive accountability,* which refers specifically to the duty organisations have to respond to, and include beneficiaries and stakeholders in their activities when there are no sanctions or formal obligations to do so.

Such distinctions are helpful in identifying types of accountability because they create clear structural definitions. However, they do not explain the difficulties organisations have when balancing multiple accountabilities. In an attempt to clarify multiple accountabilities in the development sector, Edwards and Hulme (1995) have separated CSO accountability into *upwards* and *downwards* relationships on the one hand, and *internal* accountability on the other. Upwards accountability refers specifically to the way that CSOs are held accountable to their donors and financial shareholders, and downwards accountability, to the way in which they answer to staff, beneficiaries, partners and supporters (Edwards and Hulme, 1995). Williams (2010) and Peruzzotti (2006) demonstrated that downwards accountability is often a responsive form of accountability, which means that organisations are not accountable to their beneficiaries in the same way as they are to donors and governments. What is especially problematic is the dilemma that CSOs face when having to prioritise either upwards accountability relationships when facing potential sanctions, or strengthening downwards accountability to enhance organisational impact (Scott-Villiers, 2002; Schmitz, Raggo and Bruno-van Vijfeijken, 2012; Andrews, 2014).

According to Koppell (2005), organisations need to clarify the operative dimensions of accountability because either prioritising the wrong accountability processes, or trying to be accountable to all stakeholders equally, undermines organisational performance. From this perspective, it is impossible for organisations to address all forms of accountability simultaneously, and the expectation to do so brings about "multiple accountability disorder" (Koppell, 2005, p.94). Koppell (2005) argued that there are five distinct dimensions to accountability: transparency, liability, controllability, responsibility and responsiveness (Table 2-1). Both Leat's (1988) forms and Kopell's (2005) expanded dimensions of accountability are helpful when

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articulating conflicting accountability expectations that potentially contribute to organisational dysfunction and are used within my analysis. However, Koppell (2005) overly equated organisational performance to accountability, by assuming that performance can be objectively determined. He discounts the difficulty organisations have in agreeing on what good performance actually means. Agreeing on universal performance objectives is difficult to achieve when multiple actors have distinct priorities. Moreover, within his framework, responsiveness to beneficiaries is only one dimension of accountability that organisations can choose to focus on based on their understanding of its contribution to organisational performance (Koppell, 2005). This line of thinking is problematic for both the relationship and representation accountability problems (Chapter 1) as it is premised on organisations being independent actors within an accountability context.

Table 2-1 Koppell's five dimensions of organisational accountability

Conception of accountability	Key determination
Transparency	Did the organisation reveal the facts of its performance?
Liability	Did the organisation face consequences for its performance?
Controllability	Did the organisation do what the principal desired?
Responsibility	Did the organisation follow the rules?
Responsiveness	Did the organisation fulfill the substantive expectation (demand/need)?

Source: Koppell (2005, p.96)

A more situated approach to accountability views organisations as intrinsically connected to their stakeholders and practice contexts (Roberts and Scapens, 1985; Roberts, 1991; Gray, Bebbington and Collison, 2006). Jordan (2007), in particular, has argued that CSOs need to be active in balancing the commitment they have to their stakeholders with their development objectives. Viewed this way, accountability is the process of identifying both the key stakeholders and the responsibilities owed to these stakeholders within the context of an organisation's development aims.

Once identified, appropriate accountability mechanisms can be built to respond to these responsibilities (Jordan, 2007). Ebrahim (2003a), in contrast, takes a synchronous view and separates accountability mechanisms into two categories: 1) tools (techniques that usually enable documentation); and 2) processes (a course of action like self-regulatory processes or participation) (see also Table 2-2 for a full range of mechanisms). Within both of these categories, the tools and processes outlined above can take any of Leat's (1988) accountability forms, but, these conflicting forms of accountability pose limits on the capacity of organisations to fulfil negotiated expectations with multiple stakeholders. As such, the power of actors to enforce the accountability mechanism determines the dominant direction of accountability (Ebrahim, 2007; Williams, 2010). This typically means that, as Jordan (2007) has suggested, the accountability with sanctions form will outweigh the responsive accountability form, regardless of the appropriateness of the mechanism.

The difficulty with both approaches is that CSOs and beneficiaries do not always have sufficient power to negotiate accountability mechanisms effectively. Therefore, accountability mechanisms must also be viewed as strategic elements deployed within social and political practice contexts (Abrahams, 2008). Hirschman's (1970) unravelling of three ways that citizens confront dissatisfaction is also applied in my analysis to detect the production of power. These are: 1) exit: the power to end relationships and practices; 2) voice: the power to give voice to accountability concerns; and 3) and loyalty: when actors choose to act loyally. My research terms the forms, mechanisms and practice contexts that structure organisational accountability as *institutional accountability properties*.

Table 2-2 Types of CSO accountability mechanisms

Accountability Mechanisms	Definition
Elections	Election of board members by CSO members
Board Appointments	Appointment of independent board members from key stakeholder groups
Monitoring and Evaluation	Assessing performance against a set of pre-defined goals for the funded activity
Standards and Codes of Conduct	Documented statements of how an organisation and its staff should operate, adopted by one or a collection of organisations
Certifications	Auditing organisations against, and endorsing them as in conformity with, specific standards or codes
Ratings	Assessing organisations against a standard or code, and rating their performance, whether requested or not
Reporting	Publishing of performance, sometimes against using a specific standard, to a specific organisation or the public
Dialogue and Participation	Involvement of affected persons in decision making on, or implementation of, specific projects

Source: Adapted from Bendell (2006, p. 59).

2.2.3   Individual accountability properties

Another main theme within CSO accountability literature in the context of development has focused on the difficulty that field staff face when balancing practical objectives with externally imposed accountability mechanisms (Wallace, 1999). Many authors have made recommendations to improve objective accountability approaches, such as improving performance management systems to create more robust and reliable descriptions of practice outcomes, and to incentivise responsive accountability relationships simultaneously (Edwards and Hulme, 1995; Cutt and Murray, 2000; Benjamin, 2010; Jacobs and Wilford, 2010). These recommendations remove individuals from the equation, thus disregarding the situated aspects of accountability according to individual contributions. In contrast, within wider organisational studies, Frink and Klimoski (1998, p.9) defined

accountability as "the perceived need to justify or defend a decision or action to some audiences which has potential reward and sanction power, and where such reward and sanction powers are perceived as contingent on accountability conditions." Within this definition, there is a greater emphasis on the interpersonal relationships of the worker and organisational norms of behaviour, whilst also taking into consideration the worker's perspective.

Frink and Klimoski (1998) characterise the worker's perspective as an actor who has control over her/his actions and capabilities to apply her/his strengths. Accountability is not a neutral aspect of organisational work, and is rather a set of practices that aims to create reliable behaviours and that influences, and is influenced by, the workers' internal conceptualisations of themselves (Roberts, 1991). Workers are able to shape their roles as much as they are shaped by their roles depending on the nature of their tasks and their position and power within the organisational structure (Frink and Klimoski, 1998). As such, accountability processes within organisations require observation in terms of how staff perceive them, and according to explicit and implicit organisational norms and systems. I draw from Bovens (1998) because he distinguishes between five types of responsibilities that individuals experience working in complex organisations without focusing primarily on internal organisational dynamics as Roberts (1991) has done (see Table 2-3 for a list of these types). My research defines the interplay between individual characteristics and perceptions on the one hand, and organisational norms and systems on the other, as *individual accountability properties*.

Table 2-3 Bovens' five conceptions of bureaucratic responsibilities

Responsibility	Loyalty to
Hierarchical	Superiors and orders
Personal	Conscience and personal ethics
Social	Peers and social norms
Professional	Profession and professional ethics
Civic	Citizens and civic values

Source: Bovens (1998).

2.2.4 Defining accountability contexts

Over and above all of these mitigating factors, the contexts that give rise to the relationships that have developed between donors and CSOs have also impacted accountability processes significantly. Punitive or controlling responses to principal agent problems coincided with the adoption of new public management policies in many donor countries (Hood, 1995; Power, 1997), otherwise cast as the New Policy Agenda in the development sector specifically (Robinson, 1994). One of the two main drivers behind the New Policy Agenda was that CSOs were "the preferred channel for service provision in deliberate substitution for the state" (Edwards and Hulme, 1995, p.4). Desai and Imrie (1998) likewise identified an emphasis in development policy on the contracting out of social service provision. Structuring relationships according to contractual obligations within an audit culture fortified accountability responses identified by Hyden and Mukendala (1999). These contextual ideologies are foundational to shaping the individual, institutional and relationship accountability properties, which my research investigates.

I define the interaction of the individual, institutional and relationship accountability properties, identified above, as an *accountability context*. Each group of properties structures accountability processes dynamically, and is influenced by

underlying contextual ideologies. In order to investigate how and why ICTs contribute to accountability processes spanning multiple accountability forms, I argue that a situated approach is required. However, the representation accountability problem (Chapter 1) questions the assumption that CSOs and donors represent the interests of poor and marginalised people. Thus, another major theme within CSO accountability discourse is the normative need to address power relations between CSOs, donors and beneficiaries by increasing downwards accountability. There is also a need to examine power-related aspects of development aid relationships because a situated approach does not always seek to challenge fundamental inequalities between donors, CSOs and their beneficiaries.

2.3   Addressing power-relations in accountability processes

One way of addressing the representation accountability problem is by strengthening downwards accountability (Peruzzotti, 2006; Jacobs and Wilford, 2010). As indicated in the previous section, downwards accountability is a term that is used to describe three main factors: 1) the extent to which a CSO listens and responds to its members, partners and target groups; 2) the level of transparency exhibited by a CSO in relation to its actions and processes; and 3) the extent to which those with less power have been involved in decision-making processes (Cavill and Sohail, 2007). According to Peruzzotti (2006), the objective of downwards accountability is the delegation of power to actors affected by CSO choices and activities. However, this is often manifested as organisational self-assessment and empowerment initiatives that do not transfer all decision-making power to beneficiaries (Peruzzotti, 2006). Effective power-sharing requires organisations to share both financial and programmatic decision-making through key decision-making bodies (Ebrahim,

2003a). Banks, Edwards and Hulme (2015) have therefore argued for a shift towards membership-based governance structures within organisations as a means of improving downwards accountability. My research examines the potential contributions that ICT can make in improving such downwards accountability through facilitating greater participation and the empowerment of less powerful actors in development aid relationships.

The centrality of participation within accountability discourses rests on the assumption that locally-driven, participatory development is more effective than expert-led, externally-imposed research and planning (Chambers, 1997; Brett, 2003; Parnwell, 2008). This assumption is not always true, and Peruzzotti (2006) argues that downward accountability is inherently problematic because CSOs are typically constitutive, not representative institutions, and are not formally accountable to poor and marginalised people. His recommendation is to focus on making CSOs transparent about their operations and intentions, and to be cautious when applying the downwards accountability term. However, in accordance with Ebrahim (2003a), I view participation as an accountability process mechanism that is an essential part of a CSO's on-going routines, but that the link between participation and accountability must be clarified. Ebrahim (2003a) differentiated four levels of participation that are necessary if the nuanced relationships that exist between participation and downwards accountability are to be understood:

1. Making information publicly available for community consultation;
2. Participation in development activities;
3. Participation in decision-making processes and potentially holding veto power to overturn decisions; and
4. Independent action of beneficiaries on their own behalf.

These levels affect downwards accountability in contextually significant ways. Jacobs and Wilford (2010) thus argued that CSOs can improve downwards accountability by incorporating the first three of these levels into organisational routines. However, they qualified this by suggesting that the third level should only apply to *important* decisions concerning the project, but they failed to define what constitutes an important decision. Cooke and Kothari (2001, p.3) argued that when participation occurs only at the first two levels, "tyranny is both a real and a potential consequence of participatory development, counter-intuitive and contrary to its rhetoric of empowerment though this may be." Tyranny occurs because project objectives and activities are determined by donors and CSOs before communities have had a chance to participate (Najam, 1996; Cooke and Kothari, 2001). According to Najam (1996, p.346) these tyrannical practices "translate into the sham of accountability" because beneficiaries have no sanction power over CSOs or donors to overturn project objectives and to guide operational plans.

Achieving the third level of participation in development initiatives does not always lead to downwards accountability either. Ebrahim (2003a) provided examples of health service projects within which citizens had limited control over decision-making, yet incurred positive downward accountability effects because beneficiaries were afforded adequate leverage to moderate unequal power relations. Similarly, Narayan *et al.* (2000) singled out an example that contradicted the majority of their findings because community members perceived they had control over a Brazilian health service CSO because they were able to give feedback, and presumed that this feedback was addressed. In contrast to these positive outcomes, Shah's (1997) example of a dam-building project in India did succeed in involving participants in mutual decision-making exercises, but failed to empower local farmer participants by not allowing them to opt out of the dam-building project all together. Another reason

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why the third level of participation may fail to improve downwards accountability is the complex social and cultural dynamics in any given context (Grindle, 1997; Gaventa, 2002). In order for the third level of participation to contribute to downwards accountability, there must be a clear and concerted effort to address asymmetric power relations through a gradual, consistent transformation process (Hickey and Mohan, 2005). The examples above illustrate the complex effects of asymmetric power relations on downwards accountability. They indicate that it is insufficient simply to equate levels of participation as a proxy for downwards accountability. What is needed instead is a more nuanced lens through which to view the inter-related dynamic that links power, participation and downwards accountability.

Additionally, improving downwards accountability involves tackling inequality in terms of both power and capabilities (Heller and Rao, 2015). When viewed in this context, capabilities to control one's life choices or the decisions that affect one's life are explored within the scope of empowerment literature. This substantial body of literature defines numerous dimensions and structural aspects of empowerment (Friedmann, 1992; Perkins and Zimmerman, 1995; Oakley, 2001; Alsop and Heinsohn, 2005). According to Sen (2001) people should have the freedom and capabilities to lead the lives that they have reason to value. Sen (2001) broadly focuses on human well-being and capabilities, and does not discuss CSO activities directly. I am interested specifically in that facet of empowerment research that addresses the process through which marginalised people develop capabilities to demonstrate autonomy in decision-making vectors within CSO activities (Narayan *et al.*, 2000). According to Friedman (1992), in order to achieve the autonomy to make decisions individuals have to work together to transform social power into political power. Within this process of empowerment, individuals learn the specific skills that are needed, if they are to participate in a way that enables them to express their

political power (Friedmann, 1992). These skills are communication, exchange, negotiation and consensus-building (Friedmann, 1992). However, the empowerment of individuals is not guaranteed, as it is constrained by a range of contextualising factors referred to by Zheng and Stahl (2011) as *situated agency*. According to Zheng and Stahl (2011, p.77) situated agency means that "individual agency [is] not only a product of specific socio-historical settings, but also subjected to hegemony of ideologies (*e.g.* values, beliefs, knowledge systems), and involved in the production and reproduction of these socio-historical structures and ideological tenets." Viewed in this way, individuals become empowered within the boundaries of their political and cultural contexts and to the extent that they are able to challenge or reconstruct existing realities. My research focuses specifically on whether and how ICT is being used within CSO practice to support empowerment processes as outlined above.

Many CSOs strive to act as an interface between local, regional and global institutional contexts, which ostensibly enables them to wield a positive influence over the wider social transformation processes within which beneficiaries are embedded (Korten, 1990). However, when CSOs operate at international levels where they are disconnected from local contexts, their position to act on behalf of or to understand local realities is diminished (Williams, 2010; Dhanani and Connolly, 2014). In the scenario where CSOs are directly in contact with beneficiaries, it is therefore critical for CSOs to develop capacities to prioritise local empowerment processes in the face of organisational interests, and as actors within global policy agendas. Balboa (2014) proposed that transnational CSOs gain more power to affect structural change when they develop three specific capacities:

- *Political capacity*: to influence ideas and practices at the network level, and to gain a favourable decision-making and collaboration position within a network.

- *Technical capacity:* to carry out work efficiently and effectively, whilst remaining true to organisational mission.

- *Administrative capacity:* to manage the human and information resources needed to accomplish organisational work.

These capacities create distinct forms of situated organisational empowerment. Balboa (2014) argued that developing these distinct capacities is not sufficient, however, and suggested the development of a further *bridging leadership capacity* is necessary to link all three forms of organisational empowerment in order to strengthen downwards accountability. In contrast to Balboa's (2014) view that organisations can be downwardly accountable whilst simultaneously advocating for structural change at regional and global levels, Pearce (2010) suggested that while learning to function within the current development aid system, organisations lose the potential to support real empowerment. Pearce (2010, p.632) argued that structural transformation requires resistance to bureaucratic forms of organisational work and believes that once organisations "start speaking as part of the alliance of the powerful, […], they will lose those connections with the grassroots that keep the politics of social change vibrant and constantly challenging." She suggested instead that situated agency is facilitated through the spaces that CSOs open up. Whilst I agree that Pearce's (2010) views regarding grassroots development outline the potential for power gains to local actors, solely adopting this view presupposes that structural change follows directly from local empowerment. However, considering my

research investigates the contributions of ICT to accountability, which has the potential to permeate local, regional and global levels, Balboa's (2014) bridging leadership capacities offers a more realistic framework for researching organisational empowerment to effect structural change and warrants further investigation.

I draw two main conclusions from the issues surrounding downwards accountability, participation and empowerment. First, downwards accountability must be examined as a process. Whilst higher levels of participation are good indicators of downwards accountability, power and position must be examined critically in context for this relationship to be established (Brett, 2003). Second, since donors and CSOs need to support poor and marginalised people to gain the skills they need to represent themselves, downwards accountability is also reliant on the institutional structures and ideological tenets that these organisations imbue. Organisations embody forms of empowerment that impact downwards accountability in different ways. I apply two power analysis techniques to examine the influence of ICT on downwards accountability within organisational and relationship contexts.

The first technique is Cornwall's (2005) analysis of power in the construction and governance of *participation spaces*. Generally, actors that have a say in how a space is created have more power within it. Actors also have different levels of power in different spaces (Cornwall, 2002; 2005). For example, beneficiaries that are involved in a participatory development programme might have power within a physical context, but when the activities are documented and disseminated in an ICT environment, they may have very little power and control over their contributions due to access or skill-related constraints. Cornwall (2005) distinguished between three spatial categories: a *closed space* of participation is one where decisions are taken behind closed doors and where people are not included to observe how processes unfold; an *invited space* is one where people are invited to participate, but are

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typically governed by the rules and limits of participation set out for them; and a *claimed space* is when marginalised people take or create a space autonomously for themselves. These spatial categories are similar to Ebrahim's (2003a) levels of participation, but facilitate greater heuristic refinement, and allow researchers to examine multiple levels of participation and decision-making processes, concurrently. I refer here to Cornwall's work using her original terms, whilst adopting the term *context* in the remainder of the thesis.

The second technique is Mayoux's (2001) empowerment evaluation framework which helps to analyse interactions between contexts, forms of empowerment and power relationships. Three features of the framework define its analytical dimensions:

- *Forms of empowerment:* these include aspects of situated agency of beneficiaries, CSO and donor staff, and the political, technical and administrative capacities of CSOs.

- *Domains of empowerment:* these are individual, staff member, organisation, and relationship.

- *Underlying analysis of power:* when the forms and domains of empowerment have been defined, power is then examined according to different types (power within, power to, power over, and power with).

These techniques allow for the clarification of ambiguities that emerge when researching links between forms of empowerment, participation and downwards accountability, making them ideal for my investigations into the contributions of ICTs to accountability in a variety of individual, organisational and relationship contexts.

Cornwall's (2002) and Mayoux's (2001) frameworks can be applied in diverse settings and are heavily oriented towards the situated dynamics emblematic in my research. However, these frameworks are relatively untested within the context of ICT4D research. The next section examines how I have adapted them to investigate the contributions of ICT to accountability.

2.4 ICTs and accountability practices

Research on ICTs within CSO development practices typically focuses on specific tools and functions of ICT, rather than their impact on wider accountability processes (Bruszt, Vedres and Stark, 2005; Jensen, 2005; Frohlich, Bhat and Jones, 2009; Heacock and Sasaki, 2010; Kingston and Stam, 2013). Whilst such functionalities offer new possibilities for accountability, they have yet to be explored comprehensively. This section explains why existing research within this area is problematic for understanding the contributions of ICT to accountability. I then adapt Orlikowski's (1992) structurational model of technology to investigate the influence of ICT on the situated aspects of accountability. Following this, I combine Mayoux's (2001) empowerment evaluation framework with Orlikowski's (1992) model better to understand the role of ICT specifically when addressing downwards accountability.

Two distinct thematic areas of research are apparent in this field. The first theme is that ICTs offer strategic functions that organisations should take advantage of. The positive aspects of ICTs are frequently heralded in an attempt to convince CSOs to adopt them (Surman and Reilly, 2003; Nugroho, 2008; Heacock and Sasaki, 2010). Conceptually, Surman and Reilly (2003) argued that ICTs have augmented potential for CSOs to *collaborate* at local and global levels, *publish* and share information at increased levels and lower costs, *mobilise* supporters through digital and analogue communication channels, and *observe* realities on the ground

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through data collection and research support. However, research regarding the impact of such functionalities on organisational, and specifically accountability, outcomes is uncommon.

Moreover, within this theme there are two problematic tendencies. The first tendency is to employ technologically-deterministic assumptions, which are inherently problematic as research premised on these assumptions explores the adoption of ICTs but does not explain the teleological concerns underpinning ICT use (Zimmer, 2003; Saeed, Rohde and Wulf, 2008; Seo, Kim and Yang, 2009; Saif, Chudhary and Butt, 2009; Yang and Taylor, 2010). For instance, Pillay and Maharaj (2014) measured the extent to which CSOs in South Africa had adopted social media tools, but they assumed that social media benefits social advocacy without first rigorously interrogating this assumption. Similarly, Shahbazyan (2014) documented how Armenian CSOs had shifted their mobilisation and outreach strategies from email, newsletters and phone calls so as to take advantage of social networking platforms. Shahbazyan (2014) assumed that these changes were beneficial in their own right, without linking them to specific organisational objectives within an accountability context. These studies assumed a positive causal link between ICT use and beneficial outcomes, without delineating the specific ways that ICTs can be both used and abused by organisations.

A second problematic tendency of ICT research is its narrow focus on specific tools or functions of ICTs. However, this research improves on the technological determinism tendency by critically analysing the influence of tools or functions of ICT in CSO practice (Rodriguez, 2005; Nugroho, 2011; Karhunen, 2014; Senne and Barbosa, 2015). Nugroho's (2011) analysis of Internet adoption by Indonesian CSOs sheds light on the distinctive ways in which these CSOs appropriated the Internet mainly for strategic and political use. Through an examination of the evolutionary

aspects of Internet adoption, he identified ideological shifts in the way in which CSO staff perceived their roles (Nugroho, 2011). Additionally, an ideological shift was also apparent in the positive way in which communities perceived CSO staff whom they saw as knowledgeable agents of change connected to global networks. These findings confirm the importance of adopting a social-embedded approach to ICT research. The study, however, was focused solely on the adoption process and did not address either the organisational or the relationship accountability impacts.

Vaccaro and Madsen's (2009) analysis of the impact of ICT on transparency in one European CSO resonates more harmoniously with my research focus. In this study, organisational staff reflected on the requirement to keep information private to protect beneficiaries adequately, thus accentuating the priority of downward accountability relationships. However, staff also felt pressurised to publish records of internal organisational aspects on their website transparently due to the funding requirements put in place by donors (Vaccaro and Madsen, 2009). Whilst they identified this transparency as an attempt to establish an open and honest dialogue with their funders on one level, they were also cognisant of the potential for exploitation by funding competitors as well as possibly compromising relationships with their beneficiaries. Their study highlights the challenges that the organisation faced when balancing multiple accountabilities and links these challenges to ICT adoption. By focusing on only one functionality – transparency – the multiple ways in which ICTs could potentially contribute to individual, institutional and relationship accountability properties, are not addressed.

The problematic nature of focusing on one functionality of ICTs is likewise apparent in much of the donor transparency discourse. Donor transparency is often synonymous with making information freely and openly available in accessible formats (Gray *et al.*, 2009; Moon and Williamson, 2010; Kuriyan, Bailur, Gigler and

Park, 2011), in line with right to information laws that exist in many donor countries (Mendel, 2014). Transparency enables people outside an institution to monitor donor operations in order to improve their accountability towards beneficiaries (Easterly and Williamson, 2012). Thus, ICTs contribute to resolving some of the most challenging donor accountability problems. For example, the International Aid Transparency Initiative (IATI) has made it possible to aggregate aid information across donors in order to compare aid allocations (IATI, 2017). 202 organisations, including multilateral donors, foundations, CSOs and governments, have published data to IATI since its launch in 2011 (IATI, 2017). Since then, new tools have been developed that enable Internet users to browse development funding and projects (see Section 5.1). For example, aid flows by sector, administrative costs, overhead costs, and recipient institution can now be analysed in order to find patterns in disbursement that expose accountability problems such as selectivity and tied-aid (Easterly and Williamson, 2012). By increasing information-sharing, recipients, CSOs and taxpayers alike can better monitor donor activities. When examining this practice in terms of donor relationships with CSOs, publishing data portrays only a small and explicit portion of development aid relationships to external audiences, and the act of justifying activities and costs, or responding to injustices is not built into the outwardly-facing formal systems. Overall, it is not clear how or why specific donor-implemented tools or strategies affect institutional and relationship accountability properties.

A second theme of research emphasises the transformative qualities of ICT (Nugroho, 2008; Thompson, 2008; Sadowsky, 2012; Restakis, Araya, Calderon and Murray, 2015), which potentially addresses the power-related aspects of accountability. Thompson (2008) posited that when the Web is used as an architecture of participation, akin to O'Reilly's (2005) network as a platform or Web

2.0 ideology, passive users are transformed into active agents. According to Thompson (2008), ICT networks incorporating an architecture of participation have distinct features related to open access and inclusion, horizontal organising structures, and distinct modes of self-organisation and collaboration. These architectures of participation potentially bypass accountability structures that traditionally constrain individuals, whether it be beneficiaries or staff who lack the position or power to participate in decision-making processes, or by changing practice norms so that multiple accountabilities can be synchronised. To illustrate, De Moor (2010) built a platform to enable grassroots participation in community decision-making processes. Platform features were designed to eliminate traditional, tyrannical practices identified by Cooke and Kothari (2001) linked to the power facilitators have to mediate decision-making, as well as the pitfalls of face-to-face group collaboration, and arbitrary access restrictions. However, this platform was tested in Canada, and not within a developing country, where access to ICTs is a real concern for most poor, marginalised and disempowered people (Section 2.6). Whilst acknowledging that the ICT playing field is anything but level and neutral, this thesis explores the idea that ICT nonetheless has the potential to transform accountability contexts in a positive and empowering way.

For instance, ICTs have been examined as a means to create an additional accountability channel within development projects. Gigler *et al.* (2014) found that ICTs invoked greater opportunities for citizens to include their voices through feedback mechanisms, but cautioned that organisations need to be prepared to address greater amounts of feedback, and that feedback processes need to be made explicit. There is a growing possibility for donors to create direct links to target populations through the use of ICTs. Presumably, this link can help accountability processes, for instance, by exploring how to collect and manage feedback directly

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from beneficiaries as a means to represent themselves instead of relying on reports compiled by CSOs. There seems to be little reflection concerning how a direct channel could challenge the position and power of CSOs, nor how a simplified channel of communication could reduce downwards accountability as well. Irvine, Chambers and Eyben (2006) argued that an effective way to understand the realities of beneficiaries is for donor staff to immerse themselves in local contexts. In other words, ICT channels may compromise the extent to which donors will understand local realities if they substitute first-hand experience with a simplified communication channel. The kinds of knowledge and experience needed to learn are discussed further in Section 2.5 below.

The above review of existing research on ICT contributions to accountability has highlighted potential benefits, but also the limits of most research to date. ICTs have primarily been conceptualised in terms of first-order effects rather than analysed for their second-order impacts on accountability processes. Functionalities that are relevant to accountability processes have not been thoroughly examined in ways that address the situated aspects of accountability. It is not clear how or why ICTs influence multiple accountabilities. Research that has focused on interactions between ICTs and practice contexts have demonstrated significant value, but these studies have usually focused narrowly on one tool or function of ICT (Vaccaro and Madsen, 2009; Nugroho, 2011; Karhunen, 2014).

In order to overcome these limitations, Orlikowski's (1992) structurational model of technology was adapted to examine the situated aspects of accountability. Orlikowski's (1992) model views the agency of actors as immanently structured by socio-cultural norms and power relations. She posited that within organisations, technology is another structural element that produces and re-produces human action (Orlikowski, 1992). The structurational model of ICT gives *interpretive flexibility*

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to ICT such that ICT is context dependent and emergent rather than narrowly defined by tools or features (Orlikowski, 1992). However, as Zheng (2015) remarks, Orlikowski's idea that technology embodies social structure was criticised because social structures are only given meaning through practice from the structurational perspective. Thus, Orlikowski (2000) then contributed a practice lens through which technologies are constituted through their enactment. I adopt this notion of technology in practice to perform the analysis in the thesis, acknowledging that technologies, actors and contexts are constitutively entangled. For instance, Gibson's (1977) theory of affordances posits that environmental cues establish sets of possible actions to take, which may be perceived by people directly without consciously processing the possibilities. Technological affordances therefore outline possible actions for actors to take, but this does not explain how or why actors are influenced by these affordances.

Nevertheless, Orlikowski's (1992) structurational model is still useful for the reader to understand the different types of influence actors and contexts can have on technologies in practice. This model has three inter-related components:

- *Human agents:* human agents influence technology by designing, modifying and appropriating technology.

- *Institutional properties:* the institutional layer likewise imposes constraints that influence how human agents use and create ICTs and institutions are also structured and transformed by ICTs.

- *Technologies:* technology provides a medium of human action by constraining activities, imbuing perceptions and establishing norms of interaction.

Whereas Orlikowski (1992) viewed *institutional properties* as the norms, rituals, social practices and traditions that take place within organisations, Section 2.2 defined *accountability properties* that extend beyond institutions within relationships between donors and CSOs. My research evaluates how and why individual, institutional, and relationship accountability properties influence and are influenced by actors' engagement with ICTs. This is summarised in Figure 2-1, in which each arrow denotes the influence of ICT in one of three given practice contexts: a) the influence of actors to shape the design and use of ICT; b) the influence of ICT to constrain human action; and c) the influence of the accountability context on actors; and d) the influence of ICT on the accountability context. Whilst previous research has identified distinct effects of the accountability context on actors (Wallace, 1999; Ebrahim, 2003b; Pratt, Adams and Warren, 2006), these have not been connected to the influence of ICT. Focusing on the interaction between ICTs, actors and their context of use enables me to address situated aspects of ICT, learning and accountability as they emerge.

Figure 2-1 The structurational model of technology applied to accountability processes
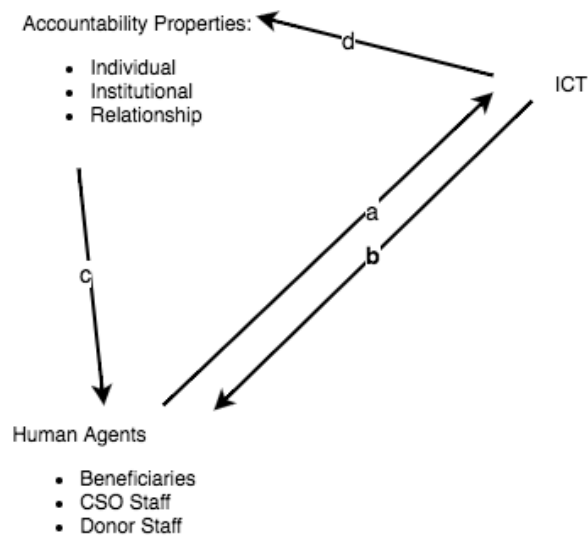
Source: Adapted from Orlikowski (1992).

Additionally, I combined Mayoux's (2001) empowerment evaluation framework with Orlikowski's (1992) model to investigate the interaction between technology, power, forms of empowerment, and accountability properties across different groups of actors and contexts. Table 2-4 outlines the different levels of influence and engagement with ICT as a means to understand the relationship between ICT and downwards accountability. The indicators within this table suggest that higher levels of empowerment and control over ICT influence will have positive returns to the accountability context.

Table 2-4 The influence of ICT on downwards accountability

Type of power relation \ Type of influence of ICT	Arrow a ICT as a product of human action	Arrow b ICT as a medium of human action	Arrow c Influence of accountability context on interaction with ICT	Arrow d Impact of interaction with ICT on accountability context
Power within: • Awareness and desire for individual change	(a) Desire for access/increased awareness to use ICT within role	(b) Positive evaluation of returns from ICT use	(c) Accountability context positively reinforces awareness of ICT for accountability	(d) Interaction with ICT positively reinforces awareness of accountability context
Power to: • Increased individual capacity for change • Increased opportunities for access	(a) Access to ICT to engage with CSO	(b) ICT facilitates engagement with accountability context	(c) Accountability context positively reinforces interaction with ICT for accountability	(d) Interaction with ICT for accountability incurs greater opportunities to transform accountability properties
Power over: • Changes in underlying resources and power • Constraints at organisational and relationship level • Individual power/action to challenge constraints	(a) Actors design and appropriate ICT for accountability purposes	(b) ICT facilitates actors to challenge organisational and relationship accountability properties	(c) Accountability context positively reinforces interaction with ICT to change accountability properties	(d) Interaction with ICT for accountability transforms accountability properties
Power with: • Increased solidarity/joint action with other beneficiaries/ organisations to challenge underlying resource and power constraints at organisational and relationship level	(a) Actors jointly design and develop ICTs to transform accountability contexts	(b) ICT facilitates joint action to challenge underlying resource and power constraints	(c) Accountability context positively reinforces joint action to challenge underlying resource and power constraints	(d) Joint action via ICT transforms underlying resource and power constraints

Source: Adapted from Mayoux (2001) and Orlikowski (1992).

2.5 ICTs, and the links between learning and accountability

It is widely argued that *learning* reinforces accountability (OECD, 2001; Power, Maury and Maury, 2002; Beardon and Newman, 2011). However, it is essential to be specific regarding what accountability outcomes are anticipated and why learning reinforces this link because learning can contribute to accountability in both positive *and* negative ways. Research on learning and accountability between donors and CSOs has mainly focused on the impacts of *technical/managerial* frameworks on CSO development practice (Binnendijk, 2000; Gasper, 2000; Vähämäki, Schmidt and Molander, 2000). The logical framework analysis (log frame analysis) is one example of a technical/managerial framework that can be used simultaneously for learning and accountability within development aid relationships, and was particularly popular among bilateral donors such as DFID in the 2000s (Menon*, Karl and Wignaraja, 2009). The log frame essentially guides development planners through a blueprint approach to identifying both what they aim to achieve and how they hope to achieve it (Ehrenhard, 2009); and this information is categorised into a matrix explaining how they will know if they have been successful in their endeavour. Proponents of this approach argued that it presents a standardised method for clearly delineating responsibilities, activities, and expected outcomes, such that principal-agent relationships are explicitly structured (Meier, 2003; Menon *et al.,* 2009). As a learning tool, *ex ante* results can be confirmed through research and evaluation, but some institutions have reported difficulty integrating learning into policy and practice using this approach (Wallace, 1999; UNDP, 2007). Nevertheless, according to this technical/managerial perspective, learning and accountability are positively reinforcing each other because expected results are confirmed and rewards or

sanctions are given to the accountability relationships that are responsible for achieving results (Eyben, 2013).

However, the technical/managerial perspective does not always account for situated aspects of accountability, and this can impact on development results considerably (Section 2.2). Furthermore, learning is narrowly defined as a *post hoc* activity, which does not always support a range of stakeholders to incorporate learning outcomes into their practice (Biggs and Smith, 2003). For instance, Mebrahtu's (2002) study showed that technical/managerial monitoring and evaluation practices caused field staff to feel overworked and disempowered to learn. This was problematic for downwards accountability relationships because the field staff did not have the power or desire to learn about issues that were important for their roles as development facilitators. Alternative conceptualisations of learning and accountability show that learning and accountability can be positively reinforced for some actors, whilst others with less power and control tend to lose out (Chambers, 1997; Powell, 2006; Eyben, 2010).

In an attempt to deal with the deficiencies of log frame analysis, development institutions have increasingly adopted the theory of change framework and business case approaches (Anderson, 2005; Stein and Valters, 2012; Vogel, 2012). The goal of the theory of change framework is to define pathways to long-term impact objectives along with associated assumptions, rather than hedging bets on clear cause and effect relationships (Vogel, 2012). However, the theory of change framework seems to remedy only one aspect of the deficiencies in log frame analysis, namely, how progress is conceptualised and understood. This presents a more realistic expectation for social change, but it is not clear that the predominant accountability and learning processes have been fundamentally challenged. Moreover, Barder (2012) argued that whilst business case approaches may be

valuable for demonstrating to taxpayers how their money has made a difference, they do not treat the lack of harmonisation and coordination amongst donors. These critiques highlight why the link between learning and accountability requires further deconstruction, and needs to be examined for both positive and negative relationships.

The remainder of this section builds on the above and outlines three specific ways that are useful in exploring how learning contributes to accountability within the context of this research: 1) development learning; 2) learning about organisational practice; and 3) learning from beneficiaries. These views on learning frame my subsequent analysis of the interactions between learning, accountability and ICT.

2.5.1   Development learning

A key way to strengthen multiple forms of accountability is for actors to learn about the effectiveness of their contributions to development (Chambers, 1997; Pasteur and Scott-Villiers, 2004; King and McGrath, 2013). Unfortunately, consensus has not been reached on how best to learn about development. To understand the different ways in which actors learn about their contributions to development, I argue that there are patterns in knowledge and practice that can be organised into systems of knowing and doing. As Pasteur and Scott-Villiers (2004) have suggested, systems thinking facilitates understanding of the interrelationships between power, politics, structures, relationships, processes, procedures, cultures and values (Pasteur and Scott-Villiers, 2004). I define three systems of knowing and doing to differentiate between different perspectives on knowledge and practice: 1) technical/managerial; 2) interpretive/practice-based; and 3) integrative. These systems are used as analytical categories in my research to explore how and why systemic patterns of development learning have implications for ICT and vice versa.

The first system of knowing and doing is the *technical/managerial* system, which was briefly introduced at the start of this section. This system is framed by the implications of conceptualising development knowledge as objective, neutral, universally applicable, and context independent (Figure 2-2) (Schuurman, 2000). Hettne (2009) argued that the dominant philosophy behind development in the mainstream since the 1940s has been modernisation backed by the authority of scientific knowledge. The ascendency of knowledge in this objectivist tradition meant that development goals, as well as methods, were largely determined by those deemed to have the most scientifically valid arguments for solving development problems, framed by the modernisation paradigm. Development in this light is characterised by planned processes that can be accomplished by whomever has the *right* knowledge to achieve stated objectives (Easterly, 2014). The assumption is that it is possible to determine causes and effects of observable phenomena in the real world, and that these causes and effects can be empirically confirmed. `it should be emphasised, though, as noted by Chambers (1997) that it was generally assumed that those who had the technologies and knowledge were not the people in developing countries.

Figure 2-2 Characteristics of the technical/managerial system

Structures and relationships:

- Context heavily influences outcomes, but generic solutions are still argued to be adaptable and relevant to similar contexts (Sachs, 2006).
- There is a danger that generic solutions are too frequently developed by 'experts' or within high-income countries (Chambers, 1997).
- Relationships are likely to be well-defined and highly structured.

Processes:

- Learning is viewed as a cognitive (Ausubel, 1963) or behavioural reinforcement process (Skinner, 1938).
- People can internalise external truths or directives and form their own thoughts around these truths (Bloom, 1956).

Cultures and values:

- Actors may be driven by an ideological commitment to finding 'proof,' whilst visionary intellectuals are privileged and expertise may become hegemonic (Easterly, 2014).
- Derived, simplified, translated, and codified representations of knowledge are typically sought (Alavi and Leidner, 2001).
- Development practitioners are professionals that fulfill a job description, whatever this may be (Lewis and Sobhan, 1999; Bebbington and Riddell, 1995).

Power and politics:

- Power relations are characterised by hierarchical organising structures, with clear responsibilities that enable principal-agent forms of accountability (Edwards and Hulme, 1995).

Source: Author.

The second system of knowing and doing is the *interpretive/practice-based* system. McFarlane (2006, p.288) argued that development knowledge and learning is "partial, social, produced through practices and both spatially and materially relational." According to McFarlane (2006), knowledge can only be constructed through interaction, is contextually situated and takes both tacit (embodied) and/or explicit (external) forms. McFarlane's (2006) view of knowledge in development is consistent with practice-based knowledge management literatures which tend to frame knowledge as socially-constructed, multi-dimensional, contestable and where

knowing and doing are inseparable (Hislop, 2005). Interpretive and action-research investigative frameworks are amenable to this knowledge and practice perspective because they privilege learning amongst various stakeholders, and assume that knowledge is context-dependent and politically contested (Walsham, 2006). Other characteristics of this system are displayed in Figure 2-3.

Figure 2-3 Characteristics of the interpretive/practice-based system

Structures and relationships:

- Exhibits an inextricable link between learning and the context of learning (Brown and Duguid, 2001).
- Knowledge is locally-embedded (Powell, 2006).
- Relationships should seek to balance power, and to be non-dominative and mutually beneficial (Chambers, 1997).

Processes:

- Learning is social (Vygotsky, 1978; Bruner, 1973)
- People learn through enculturation (Brown, Collins and Duguid, 1989), participation (Freire and Shaull, 1972) and communities and networks (Lave and Wenger, 1991).
- The learning process itself is emergent and the outcomes are dependent on those involved (Snowden, 2005).

Cultures and values:

- Empowerment (Friedmann, 1992)
- Inclusion (Groves and Hinton, 2004)
- Mutual understanding and openness (Ferguson, Huysman and Soekijad, 2010)
- Pluralism (Tacchi, Watkins and Keerthirathne, 2009)
- Cooperation and collaboration (Brown, 2007)

Power and politics:

- Flat organising structures (Senge, 1990)
- Shared responsibilities (Brown, 2007)
- Partnerships (Unwin, 2005).

Source: Author.

McFarlane's (2006) view that researchers and practitioners should acknowledge how development practice has historically privileged certain kinds of knowledge, and has traditionally marginalised knowledge of local people is important for two reasons. First, it implies that development learning involves questioning

underlying power structures and ideologies that have historically been favoured, which resonates with my focus on addressing power-related aspects of ICT for accountability. Second, as Eyben (2014) argued, it is necessary for development practitioners to recognise the use and abuse of one's own power and response to the systemic power that decides whose knowledge and ideas count. Both McFarlane (2006) and Eyben (2014) argued for situating knowledge and learning within their historical, institutional and power-related contexts, whilst Eyben (2014) encouraged researchers and practitioners to take a reflexive rather than only reflective role. This means that practitioners should examine how their own power and positionality shapes their engagement, in addition to reflecting on how to influence systems positively through learning. Likewise, my research investigates how practitioners perceive their power and positionality towards ICT. Practitioners may perceive ICTs objectively, such that they may feel powerless to influence them. Such a position leaves little room to use ICT reflexively in practice. Practitioners may also fail to see how their own technological practices affect the empowerment of marginalised actors.

The last system of knowing and doing incorporated in this research is the *integrative* system. Dichotomous depictions of development learning present a gap in the literature because both systems may guide practice. It is also not clear whether interpretive/practice-based and technical/managerial systems exist side-by-side, whether people tend to shift through various systems or whether one typically dominates. Fuchs and Hofkirschner's (2001) broad integrative idea is that information is produced in social systems or in individuals and that there is a mutual and non-determinant relationship between them. Information is constructed through a dialectical and emergent process between bottom-up and top-down processes that are mediated by culture, politics and economy. Applied to development learning, this

idea suggests that people and institutions concurrently produce mutually-influencing information but that learning occurs in potentially distinct and irreducible ways. In contrast, Ramalingam (2013) argued that development organisations need to change the way that they approach development learning all together. In his view "there is a widespread bias towards seeing interconnected, dynamic, open problems as simple, closed problems that can be planned for, controlled and measured… Aid organisations frequently – perhaps consistently – misunderstand and misrepresent the systems they seek to change and the problems with which they deal" (Ramalingam, 2013, p.137). Ramalingam (2013) draws from key ideas in complexity science like self-organisation, emergence and dynamics to argue that organisations need to embrace these concepts to learn adequately about development in reality. Whilst Fuchs and Hofkirschner (2001) offer an integrative perspective on what learning *is* and Ramalingam (2013) explores how actors *ought* to learn in an integrative way, neither perspective clearly reflects what goal-driven actors must confront if they hope to progress from within the systems in which they are currently embedded. My integrative perspective draws particularly on Fuchs and Hofkirschner's (2001) work, because development learning is strongly influenced by the actors as well as the situated contexts, and these are inherently difficult to change.

A similar debate has occurred in the area of ICT for development (ICT4D) (Heeks, 2010; Kleine, 2010; Gomez and Pather, 2012; Qureshi, 2015; Toyama, 2015). Despite evidence that some researchers and practitioners believed that ICTs will automatically transform organisations and contexts (Norris, 2001; Servon, 2002), many scholars adamantly argue against such transformative claims, suggesting instead that ICTs only amplify existing skills and intent (Toyama, 2015), or that ICTs must be understood as components of existing socio-technical structures (Heeks and

Stanforth, 2015). However, ICT4D research commonly evaluates ICT projects against development objectives rather than the role of ICTs in facilitating development learning across institutional contexts. My research therefore examines the extent to which the systems of knowing and doing shape donor and CSO staffs' beliefs and behaviours regarding the role of ICT in development learning. I also examine how and why ICTs influence actors' perceptions of learning and accountability according to the three systems of knowing and doing.

2.5.2   Learning about organisational practice

Ebrahim (2007) has argued that organisational learning improves accountability, particularly when learning leads to changes in organisational structures and policies that reflect progress towards the organisation's mission. This argument is based on a particular notion of organisational learning that was posited by Argyris' (2004) distinction between single-loop versus double-loop learning. Single-loop learning means that people learn and act within existing organisational frameworks, for instance, learning to do their jobs well. Double-loop learning is when existing practices, frameworks and policies are changed as a result of learning. However, attempts to facilitate double-loop learning are fraught with complexity. This is because organisations cannot entirely predict everything that they need to know in order to progress (Tsoukas, 1996). Organisations also need to develop the capacity to learn and adapt in order to operate within a complex and changing environment (Ramalingam, 2013). There can, as a result, be no uniform way to capitalise on double-loop learning opportunities that is definitively positive for accountability. This complexity makes selecting ICTs for organisational learning problematic. I explore three ICT approaches that are aligned with various strategies to learn about organisational practice.

The first ICT approach focuses ICT choices on functional needs for organisational learning. Within the area of knowledge management, researchers such as Alavi and Leidner (2001) and Nonaka and Konno (1998), have created models to assist different kinds of organisations to manage knowledge flows to improve learning processes. These models define contexts and cyclical processes through which knowledge is generated and organisational learning is integrated into practice across divisions by being conscious of information flows and key relationships. According to this perspective, specialised ICT tools and applications can be designed to support knowledge flows (Powell, 2003; Butler *et al.*, 2008). However, there are two major problems with a functional approach to ICT. The first problem relates to the technical aspects of specially-designed or selected tools. These tools can be costly to develop or purchase and are potentially underutilised across complex organisations if the interplay between organisational context, routines and technology is not factored into integration processes (Hjort-Madsen, 2006; Burton-Jones and Gallivan, 2007; Baptista, 2009; Hester, 2014). Additionally, over time, specialised tools potentially become rigid, inflexible or outdated due to rapidly-changing environments.

The second problem stems from the interaction between learning and accountability. Newman and Newman (2015) argued that organisational learning is shaped by power interests tied to the structure, language, goals and mission of organisations. Regardless of tool features or designs, Newman and Newman (2015) suggested that underlying power interests need to be addressed before or during the introduction of new tools or processes, as employees may feel coerced and disempowered to learn. This observation is reflected in the CSO literature by Mebratu's (2002) study, within which learning activities were perceived as add-ons. Both of the above problems advocate against viewing ICTs as inputs designed for

specific uses. My research explores ICTs as critical components embedded within an accountability context to shed light on the intersection of ICT, organisational learning and the situated aspects of accountability.

The second approach to ICT is focused on providing flexible infrastructure that can accommodate a wide range of learning practices. Email, Internet and mobile communications services have infiltrated organisational practices to varying degrees, but are largely now considered as essential tools (Anheier, 2014). Cloud-based enterprise systems are marketed as packaged productivity suites that organisations can use for any and all of their communication and information management needs (Wilcocks, Venters and Whitley, 2014). Cloud computing began to emerge around 2006 and refers to ICTs purchased or offered through distributed Internet services (Boss *et al.*, 2007). The cloud represents data-centres that are accessible via the Internet in pay-per-use format rather than using whole dedicated servers (Baker, 2007). By offering products or services according to only what is used, cloud-based technologies are argued to be an effective manner to reduce costs in a scalable way (Boss *et al.,* 2007). Transitioning to cloud-based services also means that a range of devices, like mobiles, laptops and desktop computers can all access the same service or information ubiquitously (Cusumano, 2010). Companies are able to spend less on the management of ICT because they do not have to pay for system care and maintenance themselves (Armbrust *et al.,* 2010). Such research potentially builds a convincing argument for managers to select organisational ICTs for economic, managerial effort and productivity reasons. Whether or not such productivity suites align with the learning and accountability needs of donors and CSOs has not been explored in detail.

The last approach to managing ICT for organisational learning is based on interpretive/practice-based assumptions that prioritise relationship building and

empowerment from the bottom-up. Wenger, White and Smith (2009) proposed the notion of *digital habitats* such that ICTs support community processes and relations in context. This means that ICTs are selected and used according to emergent community needs, as learning and accountability processes unfold. The role for selecting and implementing ICTs is then a shared responsibility, which means that new *digital stewardship* roles are required to represent and facilitate community ICT needs in relation to organisational interests. There are a few challenges in this scenario. The first is that learning processes are conceptualised as a community of practice (Wenger, 1998). Within a community of practice model, people at varying skill and capacity levels participate, contribute to and learn from group dynamics based on their familiarity with a community, their motivations, experience, objectives and power within that group (Wenger, McDermott and Snyder, 2002). People observe multiple forms of participation in order to learn the customs of the community and also to discern what their contribution should be (Lave and Wenger, 1991). This model does not discriminate between internal, external or beneficiary actors, and provides a means for various accountability relationships to be prioritised. However, it is idealistic to assume that learning processes can and do operate in this way, particularly in the case of donors and CSOs, since dominant practices have been reported as consistent with a technical/managerial approach (Wallace, 1999; Meier, 2003).

The above approaches, to organisational ICT (functional, infrastructure and emergent) constitute the lens through which I examine the interrelationships that develop between organisational learning and accountability.

2.5.3 Learning from beneficiaries

Learning from beneficiaries has widely been argued to strengthen downwards accountability (de Kadt, 1994; Chambers, 1997; Power, Maury and Maury, 2002). However, it is necessary to distinguish between whether beneficiaries are active or passive participants, and the limits of participation in learning processes need to be clarified as a means to examine the link between learning and accountability. It is often assumed that active participation need only occur in physical places, without considering how beneficiaries participate within ICT environments as well. This reflects a tendency to compartmentalise field practice as separate from internal organisational practice (Power, Maury and Maury, 2002; Roper and Pettit, 2002; Ebrahim, 2005). Likewise, there are contrasting views on how learning from beneficiaries should be integrated within organisational practice. I distinguish between three ways this is approached: learning through elicitation, learning as a component of practice, and learning as structural integration. Each of these learning types has implications for the instrumental uses of ICT.

Learning through *elicitation* views practitioners as facilitators who learn about the perspectives of beneficiaries (Chambers, 1997; Smillie and Hailey, 2001). When working directly with beneficiaries, the goal is for staff to develop listening and facilitation skills in order to lead dialogue, build trust and establish credibility in communities so that they can learn from beneficiaries whilst also becoming more accountable to them (Smillie and Hailey, 2001). As a means to achieve this, Pasteurs and Scott-Villiers (2004) argued that staff also need to be supported to develop responsibilities for learning, and for these learning activities to have meaning to them in their professional roles. However, the way that ICT literature explores elicitation focuses more broadly on the use of innovative ICTs to conduct elicitation activities (Raftree and Bamberger, 2014; Young, 2014; Social Impact Lab *et al.*, 2016b). This

ranges from qualitative data collection tools and sense-making supports (e.g. Snowdon, 2010), through to quantitative data gathering and analytical tools (e.g. Hartung, Anokwa, Brunette and Lerer, 2010). However, problems consistent with those discussed in Section 2.4 regarding ICT research are also noticeable here because overly-optimistic arguments ignoring conflicting evidence regarding learning and accountability outcomes are often made. For example, Haikin (2015) argued that ICTs offer a means to collect feedback quickly, easily and cheaply, that all stakeholders can be consulted in seconds, and that it is easy to collate this data to inform organisational learning processes. Banks (2008; 2009; Banks, McDonald and Scialom, 2011) likewise proposed Frontline SMS as a last-mile technology platform that enables organisations to reach historically-excluded populations to collect feedback from them. However, it is necessary to situate these functionalities within particular learning and accountability approaches because it is not clear who is responsible for learning or where any of this information actually goes. For instance, Raftree and Bamberger (2014) explain a range of benefits and challenges of ICT-enabled monitoring and evaluation, including for diagnosis, planning, evaluation and learning. However, their report is couched within a technical/managerial system of knowing and doing and appeals to organisations that seek to scale their initiatives and improve their own practices without questioning the level or type of involvement of beneficiaries, or the accountability of the organisation to them.

Other researchers take more explicit stances regarding who decides how elicitation activities are framed. For instance, participatory monitoring and evaluation gives precedence to local actors to debate the terms of the evaluation and to determine whether or not the objectives of the programme have been met on their own terms (Estrella and Gaventa, 1998). Chambers (1997) argued that when communities are given the opportunity to formulate their thoughts and ideas in

culturally relevant ways, this has a qualitative advantage over pre-defined elicitation activities. According to this perspective, learning from beneficiaries is a mutually beneficial process founded on empowerment principles (Section 2.3). This approach implies that beneficiaries should have a say in determining the ways in which ICTs are operationalised to meet their mutual learning needs, and does not assume that ICTs will automatically facilitate empowerment processes.

The aforementioned notwithstanding, such participatory processes are a *component* of organisational practice. As such, the selection and use of ICT as a component of learning about beneficiaries often ends up establishing new interventions as well as instrumental uses of ICT that do not always tackle the root causes of learning and accountability problems. World Vision, the Social Impact Lab and the UK's Department of International Development (2016a) carried out a project to experiment with different forms of beneficiary feedback, of which only one was labelled as participatory, whilst others involved beneficiaries actively. They conducted a series of case studies on the effectiveness of feedback mechanisms for learning and accountability, and one case study that investigated SMS-based means to provide feedback performed poorly in comparison to the others (Social Impact Lab *et al.*, 2016b; World Vision *et al.*, 2016). The reason for this was that access to mobile phones and the costs to send SMS messages were prohibitively high for the most marginalised populations. Alternatively, Van Der Windt (2013) explored a potential way of rectifying feedback and access issues similar to those experienced above. The idea was to improve learning and accountability simultaneously, by integrating intermediaries to give feedback and to act on behalf of those less advantaged who did not own a mobile phone. However, both of these studies confirmed that ICTs did not adequately tackle existing power and resource inequalities leading to the "shadow of hierarchy" emerging as a major hindrance in

Van Der Windt's (2013 p.156) case study. When learning from beneficiaries is viewed as a component of practice, the contributions of ICT have tended to centre on delivering new opportunities. My research examines how existing ICTs are used contextually, and does not focus purely on the use of new tools or methods. I investigate whether such an approach helps to solve existing problems and is better equipped to address underlying root causes of inequality in learning and accountability processes.

The third perspective of learning from beneficiaries is one that views learning as *structural integration*. This is similar to Argyris' (2004) concept of double-loop learning. However, within the context of CSO development, Gaventa (2005) argued that this form of participatory learning is increasingly connected to notions of citizenship rights and democratic governance. Learning from beneficiaries in this case is an active form of engagement within which people are bestowed rights and responsibilities and enabled to participate on their own behalf in the governance of CSOs (Gaventa, 2002). According to Heller (2001), learning through active engagement is a continuous and dynamic process that assists beneficiaries to develop competencies to negotiate knowledge and power differences. In other words, there is an explicit connection between learning, empowerment and the accountability context.

However, it is questionable whether or not Heller's (2001) form of active engagement could evolve within ICT environments at all. Pinter and Oblak (2006) argued that online discussion forums offer potential for deliberative discussion, but that online social interaction cultures diverge from rational deliberation tendencies. In contrast, Holzer *et al.* (2004) recommended that steps can be taken to enable more citizen participation online through targeted intervention and facilitation. However, it seems unlikely, given the case study evidence presented above that ICTs currently

offer opportunity for deep engagement with poor and marginalised populations. My research documents the range of ICT environments utilised by donors and CSOs and assesses the extent active engagement with beneficiaries is indeed facilitated.

2.6 ICT factors that affect learning and accountability

The previous sections explain the conceptual context within which I explore the contributions of ICTs in terms of their instrumental uses within learning and accountability processes. My research also challenges a purely instrumental view of ICT within the context of learning and accountability. This section argues that there are factors fundamental to ICT use that affect the contexts within which learning and accountability take place. These factors are generally ignored in research that addresses learning and accountability in donor and CSO relationships, and this absence skews the way they approach policy and practice. Pervasive global ICT inequalities are continuously reaffirmed by ongoing research (Caribou Digital, 2016; Hilbert, 2016; World Bank, 2016). I group these missing factors into two main categories, the first being infrastructure and the second being capacity gaps. These categories establish the frames within which I will evaluate how and why ICT factors fundamentally affect learning and accountability processes.

2.6.1 Infrastructure

ICT infrastructure, including Internet and telephony communication infrastructure, as well as hardware and software, imposes constraints on the operations of donors and CSOs in potentially different ways. Such constraints include the availability, as well as the cost and capacity of ICT infrastructures, and differ significantly across the globe (ITU, 2016), although it is not clear how these aspects of infrastructure differ or

impact on relationships specifically between donors and CSOs. My research examines how ICT infrastructure shapes CSOs' development approaches, as well as the speed at which they carry out activities, and the manner with which they communicate with donors and beneficiaries. Without understanding the consequences of infrastructural differences and constraints on learning and accountability, donors and CSOs may make poor ICT choices that compromise their development efforts.

It is well understood that ICT infrastructure deficits and challenges exist in developing areas (Mansell and Wehn, 1998). High costs as well as sparse, unreliable, or absent broadband and mobile services can prohibit institutions from gaining access to these infrastructures. High costs of ICTs may also affect donors and CSOs unevenly and in different ways. An Alliance for Affordable Internet (A4AI) (2014) report stated that on average, fixed broadband connections cost 40% of an average citizen's monthly income, and a mobile Internet connection is about 10% of monthly income in developing countries (A4AI, 2014). These percentages are much higher than the Broadband Commission's 5% target cost, and enormously different to the 1-2% of monthly income for people in high-income countries (Broadband Commission, 2015). Such generalised benchmarks do not exist for donors and CSOs to make use of, as statistics regarding average organisational expenditures in different parts of the world have not been compiled. There is also a need to conduct research into appropriate ICT infrastructure needs for CSOs through contextualised research. For example, surveys such as those that Milosevic (2015) and NTEN (2015) conducted primarily amongst not-for-profit organisations in the UK and in the US, including many development CSOs, showed great variation in spending and resourcing patterns.

I have previously argued that CSO ICT spending is influenced by the types of relationships that they have with their donors (Bentley, 2009). Yet, wider literature in this area focuses on private-public relationships to achieve ICT-enabled development objectives (Dutta, 2004; Sachs *et al.*, 2015; Uimonen and Hellström, 2015) rather than on tackling the structural issues within existing relationships between donors and CSOs. For instance, when CSOs are entirely dependent on donor funds, or operating within short-term project funding cycles, donor conditions may impose ICT expenditure constraints. When maintenance or repair of hardware is prohibited by funding conditions, or if internationally-sourced equipment is obtained with no availability to replenish or repair resources locally, it is often easier for CSOs to obtain new hardware by including these costs in project budget lines rather than absorbing maintenance and repair into overhead costs. Ultimately, this leaves potentially functional and much needed equipment blocking up corridors and closets. Power inequalities between donors, CSOs, and private corporations fundamentally impose a challenge in relation to providing, paying for, developing or using ICT responsibly and effectively yet there is very little empirical evidence establishing these links.

Donors and CSOs are also constrained by the availability and cost of appropriate hardware and software. When tools are built for different markets, environmental conditions and connectivity contexts, hardware and software may not function as expected (van Reijswoud, 2009). Most hardware and software development occurs without knowledge of the needs of development institutions, as the majority of hardware and software production operates within the global capitalist economy and its development is dominated by higher-income country companies and contexts (World Bank, 2016). However, cheaper hardware as well as free and open-source software are increasingly available. Furthermore, the idea that external

technology can merely be transferred to developing countries has been disputed since McGowan & Wigand's (1984) early notions on this matter. Limited resources to maintain and replenish technology, degradation caused by environmental conditions, different modes of thinking and acting, language, literacy and culture have all demonstrated severe problems in this approach (Sadowsky, 2012). In dealing with these difficulties, discourse surrounding what constitutes appropriate technology beginning with Schumacher's (1973) observations, led to views of appropriateness based on technical elements such as affordability, sustainability, and functionality of hardware and software (van Reijswoud, 2009). Whilst these technical factors relating to hardware and software production are important, sustainability also hinges on ownership and control over hardware and software (Vallauri, 2015). CSOs with headquarters in low-income countries may find it more problematic when finding and acquiring appropriate hardware and software.

2.6.2   Capacity Gaps

The second ICT factor refers to disparities in cultures of communication and information sharing due to the form and transfer capacity of networked ICTs. Differences in ICT availability and affordability have created disparities in terms of who is connected and how they are connected (Hilbert, 2016). Early arguments in favour of increasing access to ICTs to close a digital divide rarely made distinctions regarding kinds and purposes of ICTs (Norris, 2001; Servon, 2002). Since then, Hilbert (2014) has argued that there are different dimensions to the digital divide that are related to the quality and quantity of information and communication resources rather than only access to ICT. An illiterate person, for instance, is potentially able to gain more from video chat and video resources than written text, but the bandwidth

costs to transfer and use video services are costly when compared to the cost of SMS text messages supported by mobile platforms.

CSO practitioners emphasise the need to adapt ICT strategies to target their beneficiaries inclusively. The Social Impact Lab (2016, p.4) defines inclusive technologies as "those that have broad reach, relatively low costs, are easy to use, rely on existing infrastructure, and use common data formats. Examples of inclusive technologies include SMS, radio, voice telephony, even blackboards and megaphones. They can be knit together to extend accessible systems and services to hard-to-reach populations." However, ignoring the impacts of engaging with people only in the most accessible or inclusive ways, misses the long-term purview needed to close inequality gaps that impede donors and CSOs from engaging with beneficiaries through ICTs for learning and accountability more effectively.

2.7 Conclusion

This thesis views accountability as situated and inter-dependent on individual, institutional and relationship properties. It is framed by a normative goal to empower development aid beneficiaries, and to enable structurally disadvantaged people, staff and organisations to work fairly and effectively towards development goals (Section 2.3). Based on these views of accountability, this chapter has explored ICT literature in donor and CSO contexts to examine how ICTs potentially contribute. Although ICTs are frequently conceptualised as accountability supports in organisational contexts, little research investigates the social-embedded aspects of ICT according to situated views of accountability in relationships between donors and CSOs. Furthermore, I constructed an ICT, empowerment and accountability framework to analyse the interaction between these factors (Section 2.4).

Learning is a key process that contributes to accountability. However, it is necessary to specify explicitly the link between learning and accountability, because learning can affect accountability in both positive and negative ways. Three perspectives on learning can be identified: development learning, learning about organisational practice, and learning from beneficiaries. For each learning perspective, this chapter has summarised some of the most important research in development studies, organisational learning, and/or ICT, to build an understanding of how these literatures intersect. In many respects, existing research has exposed how the structures, ideologies and power of actors have influenced knowledge and practice, but there is little evidence to connect these aspects to ICTs specifically within donor and CSO settings. Instead, most of the ICT literature tends to focus simply on innovative uses of ICTs for learning and accountability.

In summary, this thesis contributes to understanding the intersections between learning, accountability and ICT by exploring three main issues:

- how and why actors' beliefs and behaviours regarding the role of ICT in practice shapes situated aspects of accountability and *vice versa*;

- how and why organisational ICT choices influence power-related aspects of development aid relationships; and

- the implications for ICT when learning from beneficiaries are an elicitation activity, a component of practice, and part of an organisational learning process.

In conclusion, it is insufficient to focus purely on the instrumental uses of ICT for learning and accountability. As global ICT inequalities increase, it is also

necessary to understand how ICTs fundamentally impact learning and accountability processes. To address this, it is important to examine two perspectives on how these impacts are conceptualised: infrastructure and capacity. My research investigates how and why these factors contribute to learning and accountability across two case studies of development aid relationships.

The next chapter explains the case study research design. It presents my approach to learning about the instrumental and fundamental roles of ICT according to a social-embedded and critical ICT perspective. I also describe the ethnographic and participatory methods that were used, and reflect on the ethical concerns of conducting research in the organisational settings.

Chapter 3

METHODOLOGY: UNDERSTANDING THE ROLE OF ICTS IN LEARNING AND ACCOUNTABILITY

This thesis is a critical and social-embedded investigation of technology for learning and accountability by donors and CSOs. It aligns with an interpretivist approach which "looks for culturally derived and historically situated interpretations of the social-life world" (Crotty, 1998, p.67). Interpretivism, with roots in hermeneutics, phenomenolgy, and symbolic interactionist philosophies, implies that social behaviours and meanings must be understood in context, and from the perspectives of the actors (Crotty, 1998). This approach is useful given that donors' and CSOs' view, and practise, learning and accountability differently in time and place (Chapter 2). Moreover, this research is undertaken in the context of development, which is inherently political, contested and highly unequal (Sachs, 2009). As such, this thesis is also motivated by critical theory, which embraces an ethical responsibility to address unjust and oppressive structures of society (Thomas, 1992; Myers, 1997; Madison, 2011). According to Doolin and McLeod (2005, p.244), critical interpretivism has three principles: "1) the construction of detailed, local and situated interpretation; 2) a reflective approach that reveals and disrupts the assumptions and uncertainties that reinforce the status quo in organisations; and 3) the connection of interpretation to broader considerations of power and control."

In developing my research design, I considered methodological approaches that offered systematic ways to document and understand the interrelationships between people, organisations, technology, accountability and learning. These included applied ethnography (Chambers, 2000), critical ethnography (Thomas, 1992; Madison, 2011), Soft Systems Methodology (SSM) (Checkland and Poulter, 2006), participatory action research (Whyte, 1991), action research (Argyris and Schön, 1991), and grounded theory from a symbolic interactionist theoretical perspective (Charmaz, 2006). None of these, however offered a complete way to explore my chosen research topic. This chapter therefore outlines the reasons for my methodological choices.

I begin by reflexively reporting on my positionality and how the research evolved. This enables me to explore, as transparently as possible, how my actions, successes and failures influenced, changed, and resulted in this research. I then outline the rationale for the case study design of the thesis, identifying how and why the cases of DFID and Gender Links, and La Colombe, Crossroads and Global Affaris Canada were chosen and constructed. Following this, I outline the specific case study methods for data collection and analysis. The chapter ends by describing the analysis and theory-building approaches.

3.1 Positionality and reflexivity: Caitlin 1.0 to 2.0

We must always be aware not only of how we might influence and shape

the slice of culture we study, but also of how we ourselves are changed by

the research process (Thomas, 1992, p.67).

Technological determinant views of ICT are common within the ICT4D community, although this is changing (Anderssen and Hatakka, 2013; Toyama, 2015). At the

start of this research, I was aligned with the views of *techno-optimists* who believed that new technologies are key to social transformation (Toyama, 2015). My convictions stemmed from my background in computer science and educational technology, and from professional experiences whilst working as a development practitioner and activist between 2003 and 2010. Sometimes, new ICTs are needed, but as my empirical chapters demonstrate, there are many complex contextual factors that are of equal, and often greater importance.

Despite my optimism, I observed nuanced difficulties that CSO staff in Morocco, Mozambique and Canada faced whilst using technology. Behavioural, attitudinal and organisational patterns piqued my interest. As explained in Chapter 1, CSOs were over-burdened with tedious reporting tasks. Managers seemed to ignore the technology concerns of staff, but it was not clear why. Problems observed could easily be resolved through the design and application of user-friendly ICT, to which I intended to contribute through action research. Action research is "aimed at solving an immediate problem situation while carefully informing theory" (Baskerville, 1999, p.3). Additionally, involving practitioners in creating solutions to problems avoids imposing technology on actors, which aligned with my views on learning and development.

During my doctoral study, I gained a deeper understanding of the contentious roles of donors and CSOs in development, the asymmetrical power relations between them, and the tendency for theorists to homogenise diversity amongst them. CSOs are also increasingly dependent on donor funding, which influences their interests and practice conditions (Nunnenkamp and Öhler, 2011). This knowledge solidified my decision to involve donors in the research because changing CSO practice conditions through the application of ICT seemed contingent on their support. It was also clear that exploratory research was required to contextualise and

select institutions prior to action research, so I, too, would not make the mistake of homogenising the actors. Incorporating ethnographic methods prior to conducting the action research was designed to enable me to gain the understanding and trust that I needed to carry it out (Brewer, 2001). Further details are given of the exploratory study in Section 3.2, and of the case study approach in Section 3.3.

Involving both donor and CSO organisations significantly increased the complexity and fluidity of my positionality. Taking on substantially different roles in different settings and institutions required consistent attention. In theory, I was inspired by Madison (2011) and Thomson (1992), because they argue that researchers can challenge dominant policy and practice conditions by representing and defending marginalised actors. This resonated with my initial motivations and assumptions regarding the difficulties local practitioners faced in trying to use ICT advantageously. However, as a techno-optimist, I sought to influence both donor and CSO staff across institutional borders to construct mutually beneficial solutions to problems. In practice, I under-estimated the complexity of enacting a critical role effectively.

I encountered three main challenges to enacting a critical role: 1) access to institutions; 2) fluid participation roles; and 3) the timeline and trajectory of multi-site case study research. First, at both donor institutions, I was not granted full access to conduct ethnographic research due to security restrictions. Conducting multiple interviews periodically over the course of six months with the first donor representative gained trust and rapport. However, my limited involvement in donor settings constrained gaining richer insight into how and why practices were embedded within the wider donor organisational context. I relied on institutional documents and literature to inform me, but these did not assist me to enact a critical role to the same extent.

Membership roles at the CSOs also differed across cases. From early on at the first CSO, Gender Links, it seemed that staff believed the donor had sent me to learn about how well they are using ICTs for their work. This view of a researcher is more akin to an outsider who passively observes and documents practice (Angrosino, 2005). Furthermore, Sultana (2007) cautions that researchers, such as myself, may automatically have a dominating position because I am a white Canadian, studying at a prominent UK institution. However, I was often introduced as an intern, and interns were considered the least experienced within the organisation hierarchy. I tried to change these perceptions during participant observation periods, which I describe in Sub-Section 3.4.1, by taking an active participation role (Adler and Adler, 1987).

Actively participating in organisational activities as a member of staff allowed me to gain trust and acceptance quickly, developing close relationships with staff. Contributing to the organisation also helped me to gather data because I drew from personal experience in addition to relying on relationships with staff (Adler and Adler, 1987). Moreover, researchers almost always gain more from the research than participants (Scheyvens, Nowak and Scheyvens, 2003), so I felt it was important to contribute as much as I could. However, taking an active participation role confounded staff perceptions of the research purpose. For instance, I was invited to management meetings, and given some management consultation tasks. Yet, I also worked alongside junior staff and completed menial tasks. I gained a wide range of experience by filling in where necessary. However, this fluidity led to confusion about my role, which negatively contributed to the transition to action research.

The plan to conduct action research at Gender Links was initially supported by the management team, but this did not actually happen. After six weeks in the field, I arranged a workshop with programme managers, but an important campaign

had started and staff were busy. I needed the CEO's direct support, but she was also busy and I often felt as though I needed a 1-minute elevator pitch to convince her that my approach to research was worthwhile. Section 6.3 details how I had difficulty performing in this way, and that plans rapidly changed for reasons beyond my control. I adapted the data collection methods to interview staff individually, hoping we would find time for the action research later.

I did not modify my critical role or instrumentation. This was not received well initially by staff because the problem-solving approach appeared laborious to them, and they were dismissive of my invitations to engage in the participatory research. Withdrawing from the research setting, as Kleinman and Copp (1993) advised, enabled me to detach and gain some perspective on the situation. Additionally, sharing ethnographic snapshots with my supervisor provided an outside perspective. Reflecting on the time that remained, I reduced the scope of the research by focusing on collecting a cross-section of employee perspectives. Approaching staff individually, I outlined the potential for the participatory research to inform practice and policy conditions, and most staff then chose to participate. At no stage were staff under the impression that I was a disinterested researcher. As one female programme manager stated *"I'm really glad you are trying to help change things, because, I mean, if it's people in rural areas, how do we package the information for them?"* My participatory interviewing approach is outlined further in Sub-Section 3.4.2.

In contrast, my role at the second case study CSO, La Colombe, Togo, was drastically different. There, I took on a peripheral, rather than an active, participation role (Adler and Adler, 1987). This was not by choice, as my agreement with La Colombe before arriving was to conduct action research. However, the La Colombe Director was abroad when I arrived in Togo. Staff were instructed to permit me to

observe only. I had limited time to change my role, as our agreement was to conduct the research over a period of two months, covering both their rural and headquarters locations. This meant that I was permitted insider access to observe La Colombe's activities, but I did not contribute substantially.

Furthermore, gaining insider access to La Colombe was challenging due to my previous work with Crossroads, the Canadian CSO volunteer-sending partner. I was often perceived as another volunteer. To combat this perception, I reminded staff daily of the purpose of my research. It was difficult to gain their trust because La Colombe staff had an indirect communication style, and agreeable manner which made it difficult to understand how they felt. Moreover, integrating by following work schedules and local customs, did not change matters significantly. Staff were frequently out of the office in the villages or at the training centre, making it difficult to observe them. I made appointments with staff consistently, but avoided burdening them when sensing they were busy or unsure. Nevertheless, as Sub-Section 3.4.1 points out, observation led to significant insights, and did not pose a severe limitation to the research findings. This was also because I incorporated multiple strategies to collect and triangulate data (Sub-Section 3.5.3).

The third challenge in enacting a critical role concerned the short time line of the second case study. I planned a shorter period of field research in Canada because I was familiar with Crossroads, having worked there previously. However, the end of the fiscal year in Canada is in March, and this is when annual reports are due. Both Crossroads and its donor, Global Affairs Canada (GAC), were busy finalising evaluations and reports. My contact at Crossroads cancelled an interview scheduled prior to her departure for a field mission. She fell ill upon her return. I was, though, able to meet with her Team Leader instead, but only for an interview at the end of the research period in March 2014. Similarly, the GAC Officer was willing to

receive me for an interview, but could not dedicate more than a few hours to my research. I briefly summarised my research in Togo to discuss their main challenges (see Chapter 8 and 9). However, due to the time constraints, the Officer chose to proceed with the interview to contribute her perspective, and nothing more.

By the end of the second case study, my techno-optimism waned. Failing to complete the action research changed the theoretical contributions of the thesis significantly. Furthermore, processing the outcomes was both emotionally and intellectually challenging. It was disappointing that the actors were not responsive to my intention to share knowledge across contexts to solve joint problems through the application of ICT. Intellectually, I believed, as Taylor (1992) argues, that it is generally impossible to determine whether one interpretation of meaning is absolutely better than another, so my focus whilst working across contexts was on teasing out and justifying interpretation in mutually advantageous terms. However, my constructive approach was not successful because the actors needed to debate the terms of convergence directly. Yet, I could not facilitate such a debate prior to gaining an in-depth understanding of the contexts. Thus, I learned that action research requires much stronger relationships to be effective.

Nevertheless, it is also valuable to report on collaborative impasses, by focusing on emancipatory discourses from a variety of perspectives (Denzin, 2005). My approach to answering the research question changed by emphasising Doolin and McLeod's (2005) second principle of revealing and disrupting assumptions and uncertainties that reinforce organisational status quo. The remainder of this chapter justifies the final approach, and covers the limitations of the study due to the disjuncture between my intended methodology and the one that transpired. The research was separated into two phases, the exploratory study, and the case studies. The next section discusses the rationale and outcomes of the exploratory

study.

3.2 Exploratory study

Two goals underpinned the exploratory study: 1) to map out key learning, accountability and ICT issues that needed to be explored further; and 2) to begin developing relationships with donors and CSOs to select cases for in-depth research. The exploratory study occurred between March and August of 2012, alongside my emerging theoretical formulation. This section clarifies how the exploratory study prepared the case study design and instrumentation.

I conducted interviews for two reasons. First, interviews enabled participants to speak in their own words (Fontana and Frey, 2005), and to express meaning according to their own experience (Seidman, 2006). Second, interviews allowed me to collect data over Skype due to the geographic spread of interviewees. The broad topics discussed were organisational mission and development approach, establishing relationships, working together, knowledge sharing and learning, and ICTs (Appendices 1 and 2). Keeping the discussion broad helped me to understand a range of issues important to them.

A maximal variation sample of donors and CSOs participated in the exploratory study (Creswell, 2008). This purposeful sampling technique seeks to collect views from participants who differ by a characteristic. For donors, I sought staff who worked with CSOs, and that differed by their institutional department (Table 3-1). For CSOs, I sought organisations differing by sector and operational locations (Table 3-2). This technique enabled me to collect multiple perspectives on the research themes. However, time and access limitations constrained the sampling technique. I contacted representatives from nine bilateral and three multilateral donor

institutions, but did not interview them all. I received replies for interview requests when contact was made through professional connections and my PhD supervisor, which seemed to have increased the chances of receiving a reply. The reasons for focusing on DAC donors and some multilateral institutions are outlined in Section 2.1.

Table 3-1 Breakdown of participating and contacted donor institutions and representatives

Participating donor institutions	Roles of interviewees
Bilateral - Global Affairs Canada (GAC) - Department for International Development (DFID), United Kingdom - Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ), Germany - United States Agency for International Development (USAID) *Multilateral* - European Commission - World Bank Group	- Division or Department Directors (2) - Senior Managers (2) - Policy or thematic specialists (3) - Knowledge management and communications officers (2)
Contacted but did not participate	**Reasons for not participating**
- Ministère des Relations internationales et Francophonie (MRI), Québec - Ministry of Finland, Finland - Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA), Sweden - Swiss Agency for Development Cooperation (SDC), Switzerland - Danida, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Denmark - United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)	- Replied and then did not schedule a time for the interview (2) - Cancelled interview and did not reply afterward (1) - Did not reply (3)

Source: Author.

To select CSOs, I took advantage of having worked in Canada and in developing countries before beginning the PhD to gain access to directors quickly and reliably. I had developed close ties to CSOs in the volunteer cooperation sector in Canada and in some developing countries. When I arrived in the UK, I also began contacting organisations based there. All of the CSOs in West and Southern Africa that agreed to interviews had difficulty with Internet or with the time difference. I called two CSOs on the telephone but the connection cut off in both instances. These communication problems justify both the reason to conduct case study research in

context, and the need for this topic of research. Ultimately, I interviewed seven representatives from CSOs of different sizes and sectors (see Table 3-2).

Table 3-2 Breakdown of CSO interviewee roles and institutions

Headquarters	Role of interviewee	Number of Employees	Annual Budget (in 2011 GBP)
Canada (4)	Executive Director (3) Programme Manager (1)	11-50 (2) 51-100 (1) >250 (1)	2 – 15 million (2) 20 – 30 million (2)
UK (3)	Director of Programme Development (1) Executive Director (1) Chief Information Officer (1)	11-50 (1) >250 (2)	2 – 15 million (1) 20 – 30 million (1) > 100 million (1)
			Total interviewed: 7

Source: Author

The preliminary findings from this study aided the design of the research by shaping the thesis research questions, and helping me to construct appropriate data collection strategies. It confirmed that donors and CSOs view issues of learning, accountability and ICT distinctly, and that there was variation within these groups. Despite this variation, there were common understandings and issues that emerged within each group. For example, many donors highlighted frustrations with the reliability and trustworthiness of CSO reports. More common was for donor participants to reflect on ICTs from an *institutional* perspective rather than a *relationship* perspective. This indicated a need to draw out the contributions of ICT to these aspects in greater detail (see Section 3.4.2).

In contrast, CSO representatives emphasised challenges resourcing ICT, reporting ICT investment strategies that tended towards risk aversion. Many of the organisations implemented multiple systems for fiscal responsibility, and programmatic learning and reporting. As new tools are added to the repertoire, at times haphazardly, parallel systems can develop and cause headaches for

practitioners. Most CSOs had difficulty implementing flexible and integrated ICT tools system-wide to meet their needs, which confirmed the relevance of action research. More importantly, a holistic examination of ICT in organisational practice was required to account for the diverse uses and systems incorporated. I also realised that focusing on programmatic aspects of ICT, rather than fiscal ICT systems, was more important for addressing my research topic.

3.3 Case study approach

Three reasons underlie my choice to adopt a case study approach. First, the focus of the study is to explain how and why ICTs contribute to learning and accountability in particular contexts. As Yin (2008) argues, *how* and *why* questions are difficult to isolate from their context and are thus well-suited to case study research. Second, contextual conditions, such as ICT infrastructure and funding relationship conditions, are relevant to understanding learning and accountability (Section 2.6), which is consistent with Lincoln and Guba's (1985) view that social phenomena are situational. Third, the boundaries between the context and the topic of study are not clear, as ICTs are present throughout institutional contexts, not just for learning and accountability. Case studies enable researchers to examine inter-relationships and purposeful action in context (Stake, 2005).

However, in the early stages, my attempts to pursue action research distracted me from understanding key aspects of both case studies. Making poor choices regarding the breadth and scope of what is studied, or misunderstanding key aspects of the case is common for novice researchers (Yin, 2008). However, the core case study approaches enacted, along with rigorous, in-depth and systematic data collection procedures provided enough flexibility to recognise and resolve problem areas subsequently. Specific details regarding data collection methods are

outlined in Section 3.4. Nevertheless, unforeseen events also significantly influenced the selection of the case studies. This section begins by justifying two underlying methodological approaches of the case study research. This is followed by how and why two development aid relationships were selected for ethnographic and participatory case study research. The section ends with a discussion of the ethical concerns and procedures adopted.

3.3.1 Investigating development aid relationships across contexts

Drawing from Doolin and McLeod (2005) and Stake (2005), the first methodological approach emphasises understanding activities and meanings in context along with the wider social, historical, political and cultural structures within which the actors are embedded. The presence of inter-dependency between donors and CSOs is well-established (Ebrahim, 2003b; Hulme and Edwards, 2013). However, research often focuses on only one side of the story, by looking at either the donor or CSO contexts independently. In contrast, Kincheloe and McLaren (2005) argue that systems of knowledge and human activity must be examined against the backdrop of prevailing socio-political structures. Specifically, my research sought to understand dominant ICT learning and accountability practices within each institution, and the relationships between these practices and broader structures of power. Thick descriptions are needed to draw out how and why practices take place, even if it is not clear what influence the context has within the moment (Geertz, 1973). I chose to incorporate ethnographic methods because these allowed me to immerse myself in the contexts of research, and to learn about the behaviours, practices and values of staff (Myers, 1997; Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007). When participant observation was not

possible, I adapted my methods to collect additional data specifically related to contextual aspects (see Sub-Section 3.4.2.1).

Furthermore, Schwartzman's (1992, p.27) notion of "studying up and studying down" provided a coherent framework to explore organisational contexts. Formal and informal practice dimensions, routines, and meetings were key to understanding interactions between micro and macro levels within and between organisations. In contrast, the strength of critical ethnography, when compared with micro/macro ethnography, is that it explicitly emphasises the production of power in practice (Myers, 1997). Internalising these complementary approaches to ethnography assisted me greatly. Further details about my ethnographic methods are given in Sub-Section 3.4.1.

3.3.2 Gathering multiple perspectives through participatory modelling

The second methodological approach underlying the case study research was participatory modelling, which enabled participants to share their own interpretations of learning and accountability processes in a situated, holistic manner. I adapted the Soft Systems Methodology (SSM) because it focuses on problem-solving in complex organisational settings (Checkland and Poulter, 2006). Researchers act as *bricoleurs* to facilitate meaning-making and interpretation through the construction of practice models. In my research, models were any abstract representations of learning and accountability processes. Usually, the researcher takes on the primary construction and analytical role in SSM, whereas I was interested in involving the participants more intensely in this process. Tacchi *et al.*'s (2009) research in participatory content creation demonstrates the value in proceeding in this way. Even after extensive observation periods, I would have drawn different process diagrams from those of my

participants, and this is important when considering what is appropriate content to analyse in the construction of theoretical interpretations.

Initially, modelling was meant to begin the action research component of each study. However, as Section 3.1 explained, partners chose not to pursue this type of action research. Conducting the SSM analysis in workshops with groups of staff together would have permitted me to understand convergence of views, and to go deeper into specific issues because of the amount of time it takes to do interviews individually (Morgan, 1996). However, due to staff availability, I had to carry out the participatory modelling activity in individual interviews across a cross-section of staff. Nevertheless, the benefit of this approach is that models supported thoughtful and reflexive discussion about practice problems and potential solutions (Checkland and Poulter 2006). Many of the participants did not initially see problems in their models. Yet, through discussing, reflecting, and evaluating them, new meanings and interpretations came to light. Such an approach let the participants identify how they were thinking about the research themes, giving them voice and practical insight (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). A danger within participatory methods such as these, though, regards the researcher's ability creatively and inventively to inspire meaningful sense-making, without imposing meanings or structures onto the models (Kemmis and McTaggart, 2005). Accomplishing this fine balance was feasible in my research because of my background as an educator and close relationships with the participants. Further details of the interview methods are given in Sub-Section 3.4.2.

3.3.3   Multiple case study design and selection

Three main reasons underpinned my rationale to conduct two case studies. First, theory and practice-based models emerging independently from two settings are more powerful than from one (Yin, 2008). Second, a second case enabled me to fill a

significant gap of the first. For example, Chapter 8 outlines how severe ICT inequality within the second case illustrated contrasting reasons why ICT contributes to learning and accountability. Third, I needed time to develop rich understandings of the contexts, which was key to my critical interpretive approach. I did not, though, have the time or resources to complete more than two cases. Figure 3-1 outlines the research timeline and details of the locations.

Figure 3-1 An overview of case study timelines and sites
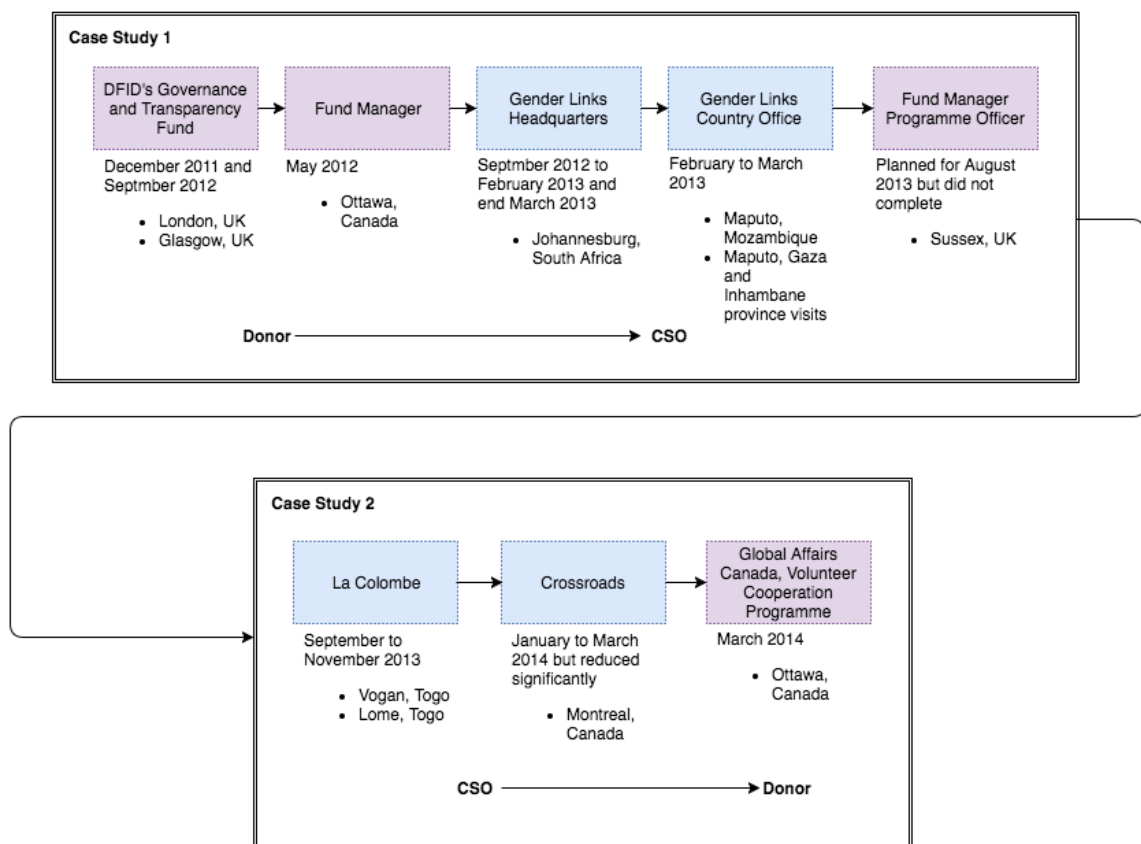
Source: Author.

Selecting the case studies was negotiated with two key research partners, who indicated interest in pursuing the case study research during the exploratory study. According to the 2015 CSO Sustainability Index for sub-Saharan Africa, 23 out

of 30 African countries surveyed indicated dependence on donor funds (USAID, 2015). This presents widespread potential for theoretical relevance and application of my research. Funding trends have also seen donors substituting away from so-called northern-based, towards southern-based CSOs (Giffen and Judge, 2010; Pratt, Adams and Warren, 2006). This trend presents a new context for exploring the contributions of ICT to learning and accountability. Furthermore, African countries experience the highest rates of ICT inequality, which poses unique challenges and opportunities for the use of ICT across contexts (World Bank, 2016). Additionally, the practicalities of conducting two in-depth ethnographic case studies within a year and a half required prior professional and cultural experience. For example, communicating in African countries is typically easier for me than in Asia or Latin America because I speak English, French and Portuguese fluently. The reasons why I focused on case studies involving Canada and the UK are the same as those outlined in Section 3.2.

A Malian CSO, which delivers professional education programmes for youth, was my first key partner. I had good contacts with them, and had anticipated that we would have a very successful working relationship. However, two weeks before departing for Mali, the country experienced a *coup d'état* (Oberlé, 2012) and it was no longer feasible to travel there due to the increased security risk. My second key partner was DFID's Governance and Transparency Fund (GTF), but at that time we had not yet established the CSO partner. Luckily, my collaborator at DFID was willing to accommodate the change in my research timeline. I suggested a CSO focused on the education sector in Southern Africa, in the hopes that the situation would improve in Mali by the time the first case ended. However, the DFID Civil Servant was concerned that the programme was not well-managed, and that the CSO would not be willing to receive me at such short notice. Although it is often when things do not

go well, that the opportunity to learn is greater, their view was that the CSO was not receptive to my research approach. Instead, they suggested Gender Links, a Southern African regional gender organisation, as an ideal research partner due to their positive experience collaborating with them. This meant that my focus shifted from the education sector to the gender sector.

The GTF Fund Manager, a management consulting firm, KPMG, was initially involved. I did not record our two initial conversations because we had not established consent at the time of speaking. Upon my return from Southern Africa in 2013, I scheduled a longer period of research with the Programme Officer based in Sussex, UK. However, I scheduled this visit to take place immediately before the second case because I had a part-time job in London, needed to finance my fieldwork. Unfortunately, I became ill in August until September, 2013, and I did not have time to complete this portion of fieldwork because I felt it was more important to dedicate the remaining time to the second case study.

I sought a new key research partner for the second case study to increase comparative potential between the cases by focusing on the gender sector. I turned to Crossroads because I knew of its partner organisation in Senegal that was using ICT to advocate against gender based violence. However, the Gender Team Leader at Crossroads suggested instead that I should contact La Colombe. She stated that La Colombe had greater difficulty communicating through ICT in Togo, and felt that it would benefit from the research to a greater extent. When I contacted La Colombe's Director, sending her an outline of the research activities and approach, she asked to speak with me, "*I received your message. We will speak over skype to understand better.*"[1] The connection was poor, and we spoke concisely to negotiate the research

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[1] J'accuse réception de ton message. Nous allons converser par skype pour mieux comprendre.

activities and timeline. I was not aware that the Director was not available at the time of research, until I arrived in Togo.

Across both case studies, selecting research partners was a negotiated process. The next section explains the ethical concerns underpinning this research, and the systematic procedures that I took to mediate these concerns.

3.3.4   Ethical concerns and procedures

The Department of Geography, Royal Holloway University of London gave ethical approval for this research in September 2012 following my completion of the College ethical approval process (RHUL, 2017). The conventional ethical ideal to do no harm (Bryant, 2014) is a concept that I strived for in a serious and systematic manner, but I could not always attain this outcome. This sub-section covers the strategies I used to address ethical concerns related to confidentiality, informed consent and research practice consistently throughout my research.

The first ethical concern is confidentiality. Ideally, researchers promising confidentiality and/or anonymity offer organisational workers confidence that the organisation or its workers will not be harmed by the research process (Benbasat, Goldstein and Mead, 1987). However, within interpretive research such as this, giving rich detailed narratives of experiences meant that the organisation's identities would easily be known. After discussing this point with my research partners, we chose not to anonymise the organisations. In some instances where the research outcomes are positive, organisations may benefit from the exposure and may also wish to be identified (Benbasat, Goldstein and Mead, 1987). In contrast both donors and CSOs are under great pressure to portray positive results and if research points to negative findings, organisations could wish to remain completely anonymous.

Formalising our mutual commitments and ethical responsibilities in a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) helped to alleviate some of these tensions (see Appendix 7 for an example). The MoU outlined the roles and responsibilities that each party agreed to contribute to the research process (Unwin, 2005). I also arranged meetings with my partners to discuss my progress and review the conditions of the MoU periodically. My contact at DFID was not permitted to sign on behalf of the institution, and instead he acknowledged verbally the terms of the MoU.

I also had a responsibility towards individual participants. Confidentiality within each case itself is often difficult to achieve and can cause tension between researchers, donors and CSOs (Walsham, 2006). Some individuals may also be easily identifiable. There is only one director of an organisation, for instance. Programme managers at Gender Links oversee specific themes, which they reference in their quotations, and are thus identifiable. There are only a few staff at La Colombe, and three volunteers in Case Study 2. An initial commitment and understanding with my partners was agreed upon at the outset through the MoU, which was shown to all participants and explained in detail, regarding the implications of participating in the research.

I made a commitment to my participants to treat them with respect, to listen, and to explain as best as I could what my intentions were so that the exchange was mutual. It was very important for me to let these people have a direct voice in this thesis, and their contributions are apparent through the inclusion of many quotations that are used to highlight and give life to the analysis. Italics within the text indicate these quotations. If the participants were hesitant to provide their informed consent at any point during the research process, I offered the option to remove themselves from the study. Some of my participants wished to use their real names. I introduce these participants in Table 3-3, their full names are used on the first instance and

their last names are used following this. Some donor representatives made it clear that as civil servants, they are not allowed to be referred to by name. Pseudonyms are used to refer to the rest of the participants.

Table 3-3. List of participants who will be referred to by their real name

Name	Position	Institution
Colleen Lowe Morna	Chief Executive Officer	Gender Links
Mevasse Sibia	Country Manager, Mozambique	Gender Links
Kubi Rama	Director of Operations	Gender Links

Source: Author.

3.4 Data collection

Data was recorded through field notes, recordings, transcripts, emails, and organisational documents. I incorporated a variety of methods, detailed in the following sub-sections, to increase the richness and trustworthiness of the recorded data. Thick descriptions and multiple sources of data enabled exploration of themes from many perspectives, both in the field and subsequently (Geertz, 1973; Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007). Rigorous attention to detail in recording data assisted with triangulation of multiple sources in the analysis stages.

3.4.1 Participant observation

My methods of participant observation varied across settings and case studies, and was conducted only at Gender Links and at La Colombe. It was not possible to conduct participant observation with donor organisations due to access restrictions (Section 3.1). I sought active membership within CSOs because it allowed me to get involved in the day-to-day activities. At Gender Links, this involved participating in organisational activities in familiar roles, such as editing and IT consulting. At La Colombe, I participated in their activities, but did not engage as a staff member.

Becoming a participant observer required a delicate and somewhat vague balance between an *insider* and *outsider* status that was difficult for me to achieve (Section 3.1). This sub-section outlines the specific activities I was involved in, and the benefits and drawbacks of the differing levels of participation.

Adler and Adler (1987) suggest that researchers have control over the settings and observational roles they enact. However, as the CEO's email prior to my arrival indicates, my role was often dictated, requiring continuous negotiation in both case studies:

We have a range of strategic IT/website/ visualising data needs across programmes... Given that time is limited, we believe that the best arrangement may be for you to be directly attached to GL Chief of Operations... we would like to make the best use of your higher level skills to push start us into a new multi media modus operandi.

Her email primarily refers to my offer to contribute 20 hours of time per week. Upon arrival, I voiced my desire to learn about the organisation holistically. Accommodating my request, a senior manager scheduled participant observation tasks across their key programme areas for me, but the two roles (IT support and regular staff member) were often mixed together. Initially, I spent one week working with each programme of their four programmes: 1) Media, 2) The Alliance (which monitored the SADC Gender Protocol), 3) Local Governance and 4) Gender Justice. My professional tasks across programmes included writing educational materials, designing Web pages, providing IT training sessions, configuring online surveys, consulting on IT systems, editing English writing for a range of publications, attending team meetings, moderating online discussions, managing social media and being a part of their evaluation team. I also felt it was important to travel to a satellite office and observe

how programmes were carried out there on the ground. Gender Links asked me to go to Mozambique because I speak Portuguese and they needed someone to accompany the Mozambique Officer on the evaluation visits as an external evaluator (Sub-Section 5.3.3).

The benefits to me of contributing to the organisation as a participant were fourfold. First, experiencing activities as staff do, such as the tight deadlines, the insurmountable amount of work, the quick pace of team work, and interactions within meetings provided me with intangible and unforgettable direct knowledge of the activities and the context (Jackson, 1983). Second, I met key staff across the whole organisation. Learning about all programmes enabled me to pose better follow-up questions during participatory modelling interviews. Third, contributing my time and effort eased the workload of staff, and helped me to gain their trust (Scheyvens, Nowak and Scheyvens, 2003). Fourth, each action-packed day was full of vivid details, discussions, arguments, tensions and insight that I would not have gathered unless immersed as a full contributing member.

At La Colombe, I was only permitted to observe activities. As outlined in Section 3.1, I was not able to work there as a participant observer, because the Director had not provided staff with direction on what I was allowed to do. Nevertheless, I was able to observe the visits of three donors to the organisation, and it was though these that I learned about their main projects. Ultimately, observing these visits was crucial because I was not given any formal documentation. These visits presented a clear outline of activities that I followed-up on in interviews and further observation. I reflect on my struggles to learn about the organisation without any documentation in Chapter 7. However, it was an enriching experience to see how their projects were presented to donors, and then to learn about them behind the scenes afterwards.

In contrast, there were two main drawbacks of participant observation: 1) the level of selectivity of recorded observations; and 2) my close relationships with staff. It was often difficult to write down observations in real-time, and as a full contributing staff member at Gender Links, unless I was observing a meeting. I took both handwritten and electronic field notes throughout all phases of case study research. As Clandinin and Connelly (1998, p.169) remark, "what we fail to acknowledge clearly enough is that all field texts are constructed representations of experience." I often had to remind myself to reflect on the day's events, remembering what I found to be interesting (Seale, 1999). Rossman and Rallis (2011) suggest using either an open-ended narrative technique or creating more structured thematic checklists and field guides. I chose to incorporate both to prompt me to reflect on aspects related to my research focus.

As such, I mindfully included descriptions of events, interactions, and conversations as well as reflections and thoughts about the field and my research. Writing notes on my laptop or in my notebook was common practice in the office environment, in staff meetings, or in evaluation meetings. Staff were not bothered. Some of the most engaging conversational moments happened in the kitchen, as with the controversial discussion about representing beneficiaries' voices on the website outlined in Sub-Section 5.3.2. I did not write notes during these conversations as it would be distracting. However, I reminded participants of my intention to use these conversations in my research, and wrote down the events upon return to my desk to capture these moments vividly.

I also wrote more structured monthly field note guides, which are referred to from now on as ethnographic snapshots (Brunello, 2015). Ethnographic snapshots contained a series of questions that were adapted from Brunello (2015) to fit my research themes and contexts. I also added the perspective modelling exercise

(Sub-Section 3.4.2.3) in the snapshots to gauge my positionality as a researcher. Initially I had intended to fill in the snapshots on a bi-weekly basis, but soon changed to monthly because of the time that they took to write, and because I was finding that I needed more time to reflect.

The second main drawback of participant observation concerned my close relationships with staff. Participants did not always fully realise when they were on or off record (Davies, 1999). Hearing sensitive information off the record happened numerous times, particularly at Gender Links, where I maintained close friendships with staff. Whilst it was easy to remind participants during informal conversations, asking them to use the information for my research, it was not as easy to erase from my mind the gossip and anecdotes recounted. I have not used this information explicitly in the thesis, but it undoubtedly influenced my understanding. In Togo, it was more common for participants to speak or agree with me to appease me (Davies, 1999). Sometime in the past, I developed a communication style in French that helps me to ease this problem. Basically, I speak nonsense in a humorous way to see if the person I am speaking with is listening, or just agreeing. It does not work when I speak English, because making silly linguistic mistakes in my second language comes much more naturally in French. Togolese participants often took much delight in correcting me or laughing at my mistakes, which enabled me to gauge their participation in the conversation.

3.4.2   Participatory modelling interviews

The second major data collection method was participatory modelling interviews. I conducted structured interviews according to an adapted Soft Systems Methodology (SSM) (Sub-Section 3.3.2). Participants explored relationships between donors and CSOs from different levels of granularity whilst reflecting on points of tension, or the

problems they perceive (Checkland and Poulter, 2006). According to Checkland and Poulter (2006), there are three main stages to carrying out SSM. The first is a *finding out* stage, which I adapted to a perspective modelling activity, which consists of identifying relevant worldviews, or perspectives of the problem situations. The second stage, the *modelling stage*, is focused on building models through the construction of rich pictures that help to create and establish representations of existing relationships between people, organisations, activities, and objects. The last stage uses the models as a starting point to discuss the relationships identified within the rich pictures. These models constructed during the modelling stage are not normative in that they are context dependent and focused on how perspectives and structures affect local realities. The last part of the progression therefore takes the next step to draw out the normative claims of what the participants judge ought to be.

Each participant was informed of the conditions of the MoU prior to interviews (see also Sub-Section 3.3.4). However, I reminded interviewees that they had a right to refuse to answer questions and to contact me at any time if they wished their answers to be removed from the study. Each participant was offered confidentiality in public forums, but I reminded them that colleagues would be likely to recognise specifics about their answers in direct quotations or in their pictures. Language patterns and speech can also indicate origins and cultures of participants (Miller and Bell, 2012). I therefore asked participants if they wished to review direct quotations. Interviewees chose instead to inform me during the interview if they did not wish to be quoted. I reminded them regularly during the interview of these conditions.

The sampling breakdown at Gender Links and La Colombe is displayed in Table 3-4. The sampling procedure changed without workshops (Section 3.1). I collected the greatest range of perspectives taking into account staff availability and consent, resulting in interviews with a majority of staff across organisational levels.

Staff that did not participate were often unable due to prior commitments, which had the following impact on my research. First, I would have liked to interview more Gender Links country staff, as interviews with Country Managers were short due to their availability. Operations across countries were clearly different, yet there was not enough time to engage with how or why during interviews, thus my analysis focuses on the contexts where most of my participant observation occurred. At La Colombe, three staff chose not to participate for health reasons (pregnancy and illness). Also, after interviewing one teacher at the CAF, I did not interview the others because they did not use ICTs. I observed their classes instead to see whether and how ICT could contribute. A La Colombe senior manager was unable to participate due to her commitments. I accompanied her more than a dozen times for observation, which gave me a general sense of her duties. However, her interview could have filled the gaps in my understanding about the organisation's approach to learning and accountability across their projects (see Sub-Section 7.4.3 for instance).

Table 3-4. Sampling breakdown for Gender Links and La Colombe

Gender Links	La Colombe
Senior Managers and Directors	*Senior Managers and Directors*
3 out of 4	2 out of 3
Managers at headquarters	*Junior staff and volunteers*
3 out of 5	4 out of 10
Country Managers	*Crossroads volunteers*
4 out of 9	3 out of 3
Mid-level staff	
4 out of 6	
Junior country staff	
4 out of 11	
Junior staff at headquarters	
0 out of 3	
Total percent: 47%	**Total percent: 56%**

Source: Author.

Each interview lasted between 1.5 and 4 hours and contained four separate activities, included in Appendix 6. Sub-Section 3.3.4 presents the breakdown of interviews by institution whilst the following sections summarise each activity. Different interview tools were used with staff upon request or if there was limited time (Table 3-5). For example, because participant observation was not possible at donor institutions, I added an additional narrative interview to collect details of their institutional roles and contexts. The remaining sections outline details of each type of interview.

Table 3-5 Breakdown of interviews in the case studies

Interview type	Gender Links	DFID	La Colombe	Crossroads	DFATD
Preliminary phase protocol	CEO	Department Director	Coordinator		1 Division Director 1 Senior Policy Analyst
Narrative protocol	2 Regional Directors 2 Country Managers 1 Editor 1 Country Officer 1 Mid-level staff (HQ)	Department Director Communications Officer	1 Instructor	1 Team Leader	1 Project Officer
Actor identification	3 Country Officers 2 Mid-level staff (HQ) 3 Programme Managers (HQ) 3 Country Managers 2 Regional Directors	Department Director	5 National Volunteers 3 Crossroads Volunteers 1 Manager	1 Team Leader	1 Project Officer
Perspective Modelling	3 Country Officers 2 Mid-level staff (HQ) 3 Programme Managers (HQ) 1 Country Manager	Department Director	5 National Volunteers 2 Crossroads Volunteers 1 Manager	1 Team Leader	1 Project Officer
Process Modelling	3 Country Officers 2 Mid-level staff (HQ) 3 Programme Managers (HQ) 1 Country Manager	Department Director	5 National Volunteers 2 Crossroads Volunteers 1 Manager	1 Team Leader	1 Project Officer
Total by institution:	17	2	11	1	3
Total people interviewed:	32				

Source: Author.

Narrative interviews

Narrative interviews, in which participants recounted daily routines and responsibilities by explaining activities and events in chronological order, enabled participants to give contextualised insight into how and why their institution functions (Czarniawska, 1997). These were used in the cases where participant observation was not possible, or for staff who I had not had a chance to observe. The main purpose of the narrative interviews was to provide context to the modelling activities and to help me engage with interviewees in the follow-up rounds.

Actor identification

The second activity asked participants to identify people who were directly and indirectly involved in their work. They were presented with a large circle on a blank page and asked to list people or groups of people on the inside or outside of the circle to indicate who was directly or indirectly involved respectively. After the interviewee had finished, I asked them to justify how and why they had made their choice. The purpose of this activity was to prime the participants for the perspective modelling activity. See Figure 3-2 for an example.

Figure 3-2 An example of the actor identification activity

Write the groups of people or names of people (if there is only one person, i.e. CEO) that are directly or indirectly involved or affected by your programme.

Oth Govt Ministries

Communities

Me

Program Officer

Councillors

Principal District Gender officers

Director Gender

Deputy Minister - Local Govt.

Minister - Gender Ministry

Donors

NGO's in Lesotho
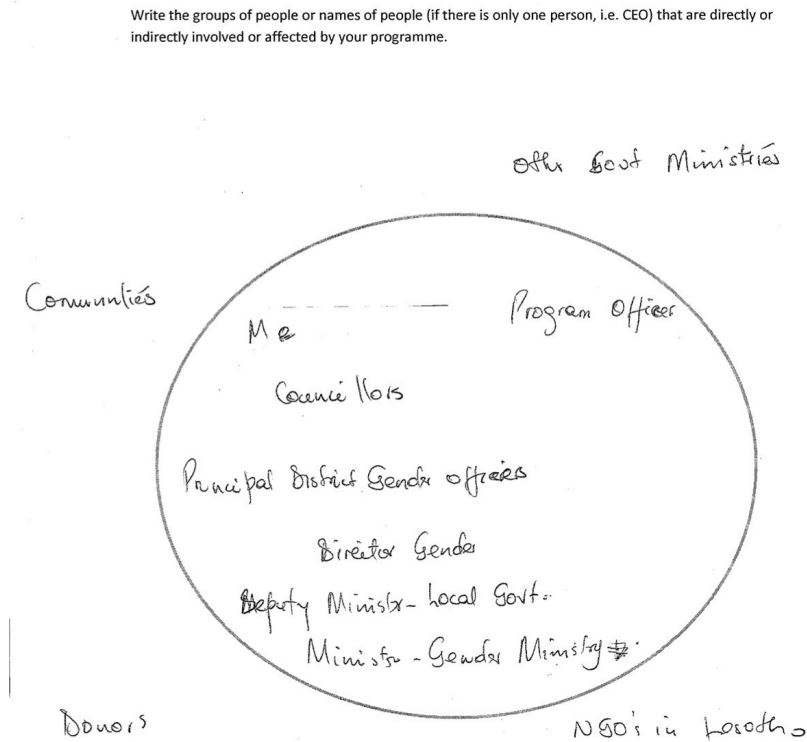
Why have you placed certain people/groups inside or outside of the circle?

Source: Rosey, country manager, Gender Links.

Perspective modelling

I then asked participants to begin with a perspective modelling activity called MAXCAC which stands for Metaphor in use, Aspirations, eXpectations, Commitments, Anxieties, and Capabilities (Boyd and Zeman, 2010). This method enables a researcher and/or a participant to model their perspective as well as how they view the perspective of others. It helps to distinguish how the researcher or participant is thinking about people and contexts, and is used to support discussion in the subsequent modelling activities.

If participants voiced having little time for the interview, I asked them to select three people or groups to model, themselves included. The choice was left to the participant as some felt uncomfortable speaking about certain colleagues. In these cases, I would ask them why they felt uncomfortable. Part of the perspective modelling activity is to pick a metaphor that symbolises how they feel within their role at work. This was also frequently a challenge for interviewees, and many chose to skip that portion. In other cases, selecting a metaphor extended to the other modelling activities and aided interviewees to express themselves in different ways.

Process modelling

Following MAXCAC, we started the picture drawing exercise to model their learning and accountability processes respectively. Modelling engaged participants in a learning process (Rose, 1997), which elicited explicit explanations of their context and practice. Engaging with the participants to build models ideally leads to hypothetical descriptions, which often revealed underlying mechanisms of their realities (Blaikie, 2010). According to Checkland and Poulter (2006), modelling enables participants and researchers to transform pictures into textual definitions of goals, values, and activity systems, and the relationships between these. Figure 3-3 is an example of a rich picture that shows relationships between knowledge, ICT and organisational programmes in terms of a tree metaphor, which combines these aspects to grow outputs. Scanned copies of original pictures are included throughout the thesis. Unclear diagrams have been computer-redrawn, and originals are available in Appendix 10.

Figure 3-3. Example of a rich picture of a learning process
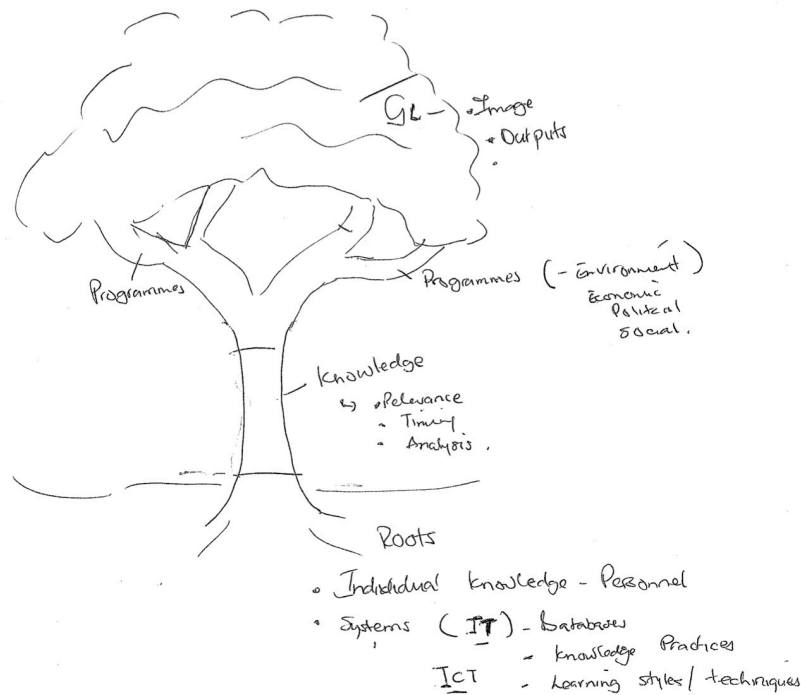
Source: Godfrey, headquarters officer, Gender Links

Once the schematics of the rich pictures were constructed, then participants began to label the elements and the influence of these on its related neighbours. Participants were provided with scaffolds to help them construct their pictures and reflect on relationships between the components (Appendix 6). These were tested with one participant at Gender Links, and were formalised into a workshop guide prior to interviews at Gender Links. I had prepared the materials for a workshop, but I used them instead in the interviews so as to not waste paper, and because initially I was conducting interviews as a backup strategy and was still hopeful that I would complete a workshop. I found that I was using the same verbal cues and examples to explain concepts and discussion questions. I therefore integrated these cues into the

aids, and adapted them into an interview guide for the second round of fieldwork in Togo (Appendix 6).

Once the pictures were drawn, discussion began using aids that I constructed by drawing from my earlier project work (Bentley, 2008a). Participants were asked to reflect on the role of ICTs, and then to evaluate the efficiency, effectiveness and ethics of their pictured process. Patton's (2008) actual-ideal comparative framework was adapted to explore how and why interviewees believed that their process model was working well. If participants were dissatisfied, I asked them what they would change to improve the process and why.

Participants were typically hesitant to draw rich pictures, asking for examples and clarifications on what was expected of them. The scaffolds tested and refined through the pilot showed different ways of thinking about, and drawing the picture, which was usually all that was needed for participants to feel comfortable to start drawing. Some participants wanted more time to reflect, and recommended sending the activities in advance. However, it was helpful for me to observe their reactions so that I could stress the importance that there were no right answers, or ways of approaching the task. Once complete, participants enjoyed discussing their pictures, and having it to refer to helped them to express their interpretations. It also helped them to make the roles of ICT explicit, because ICT was usually absent from diagrams until discussing it.

The two primary limitations of the modelling activity stemmed from time constraints, and from focusing on learning and accountability processes too generally rather than on specific problems from the beginning. For example, participants chose not to work through each actor group in the perspective modelling activity because it took a while, and they felt uncomfortable discussing certain co-workers. Also,

participants did not often identify problems when they evaluated their processes. Engaging with problems, meanings and practices of ICT use from different vantage points was affected by these limitations. I chose not to emphasise the problem-solving aspect of the research during interviews because the interviews were already long and I believed there would be time to carry-out problem-solving discussions in a workshop (Section 3.1).

3.5 Data analysis

This section outlines the procedures used to analyse the data. As recommended by Miles and Huberman (1994), I identify how data was transcribed, coded, organised into themes, and triangulated. The section ends with the approach to theory building taken.

3.5.1   Storage, transcription and coding of data

Field notes, ethnographic snapshots, work-related outputs from participation observation periods, interview transcripts and institutional documents were all included in the analysis. I transcribed the 32 interviews myself. All interview and note data were stored locally on my computer and in two secure online locations. The data did not contain sensitive information, and were stored according to confidential IDs. The first names of participants have been replaced with aliases in the field notes.

I used a cloud-based qualitative analysis tool called Dedoose (http://www.dedoose.com) because of its low-cost, ease of use and access from any computer connected to the Internet. This enabled me to group and visualise the data. Initially, I attempted a range of coding techniques to scan for different kinds of patterns. These were descriptive coding (to label events and topics) (Miles and

Huberman, 1994), process codes (to connect actions and behaviours) (Charmaz, 2002) and values codes (to connect beliefs with actions) (Le Compte and Schensul, 1999). Eventually these coding methods were abandoned in favour of creating matrix displays (Miles and Huberman, 1994). I found I was not reading the materials as deeply as I would like whilst scanning and coding. I also found that the procedure was repetitive because I had already identified many themes in my snapshots, just as Walsham (2006) describes.

Engaging deeply with the material, by listening and re-reading was much more effective for me. Bernard (2013, p.357) calls this the "ocular scan method, or eyeballing," and also recommends this as a first step. I had transcribed the interviews myself and re-read transcripts and field notes several times, at which point, I was able to connect responses with events that I had experienced in my field notes. This is also why matrix displays were more effective for me, because I could arrange different data sources together, side-by-side, making it easier to compare themes by case, or by particular groups of staff, by cutting and pasting rows and columns into different matrix displays. The matrix displays were therefore eventually used systematically to describe how themes differed across participants, case studies and field notes combined (see Table 3-6 as an example).

Table 3-6 Example of a matrix display for accountability processes

ID	Description of Diagram	Summary Quotes to Explain Diagram	Evaluative Quotes	Observations
GL Assistant 1, M	Him at his desk and orders coming from HQ to his boss and then a giant hammer over his head. Time is indicated as urgent, so that he has to communicate with all of their many constituents represented by many circles and repeated arrows.	"C'est presque la même diagramme. Yeah. Parceque tu es entre marteux est ... Tu dois obeyer les ordres. Si vous pressez, tu dois presser les autres." "C'est la pression, c'est toujours la pression. Pression, pression, pression, pression."	"Tu sais que tu dois faire… Seulement comme ça. Si tu ne fais pas il n'ya personne qui peut faire ça, parce que nous sommes juste 2 ou 3 dans le bureau. Je suis obligé."	He couldn't really evaluate his diagram, he insisted, after trying to see it in a number of ways, that he is only obligated, and that is the way it is. He works, 10-13 hr days. He says he is not afraid of losing his job, but just values working hard. When asked to evaluate other aspects of the diagram, like the relationship between the boss and HQ, he refused because he said it's not his "chaine".

Source: Author.

3.5.2 Theory building

My research followed the interpretivist tradition of building on theory through an iterative process of data collection and analysis (Charmaz, 2006; Walsham, 2006). My conceptual framework provided an initial guide with which to view learning, accountability and ICT in practice. Once in the field, I implemented Charmaz's (2006) techniques through writing the snapshots. Snapshots were a crucial way for me to focus my attention on certain themes by comparing my participant observation experience with interviews and early theories. Likewise, my intention to begin the case studies through inductive, exploratory research and progress to problem-based action research aligned with such an iterative approach.

However, since the action research did not happen in Case Study 1, I concentrated on early theories developed within the ethnographic snapshots to

proceed with a more focused analysis of interview data whilst waiting for the second case study to begin, as outlined above. At this interval, Charmaz (2006) suggests to build theory by gathering more data that focuses on emergent categories and their properties. Thus, theory-building serves to describe and explain the social world (Crotty, 1998). In contrast, critical theorists tend to focus on dialectical relationships between social theory, historical situatedness, and sets of meanings that reinforce hegemonic interests (Stahl, 2008). At the time, I was still hopeful to carry out the action research component in the second case, and I did not change my theory-building strategy at that time. Nevertheless, this period of analysis helped me to modify interview guides, and to sharpen emergent theoretical propositions.

Once both case studies had ended, I revised my approach and selected themes to contribute insight into the reasons why ICTs contributed to learning and accountability (Walsham, 2006). To refine themes across case studies, Flick's (2009) thematic coding procedure suggests constructing casebooks, where short descriptions are written for each case. The central topics of interest that are unique to each case are drawn out and summarised, at which point the researcher selects one case to perform a deep analysis. Walsham (2006), on the other hand, takes a much more flexible and open approach to cross-case analysis, noting a concern regarding coding procedures such as Flick's (2009), because it encourages researchers "to get 'locked in' to the themes as the only way to look at the data" (Walsham, 2006, p.325). In my research, considering each case individually facilitated seeing the contrasting nature of the second case because Togo fundamentally lacks ICT capacity (Chapter 8). The second case study lacks richness in *how* ICT contributes because of this inequality. The cross-case themes of how and why ICT *instrumentally* and *fundamentally* contribute to learning and accountability emerged from this comparison.

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I therefore focused primarily on the Gender Links case to perform a deep analysis because of the variation and amount of data I had collected. In Case Study 1, the themes I selected represented the case most fully. I discarded themes if they departed significantly from my research focus, or if I did not have rigorous evidence or multiple perspectives on the matter. In contrast, the interpretation of the second case study focused on how generated themes differed from the first case. However, Stake (2005) notes that cross-case comparison tends to focus analysis too heavily on general variables, diminishing potential to give rich insight into cases. Thus, I also explained the unique and complex aspects of both cases to demonstrate that both cases give rich insight.

Additionally, my desire to use the outcomes of this research to improve technology for learning and empowerment heavily influenced the patterns that I sought within the data, and the theories that I am building on. Including these interests in my conceptual framework was a way for me to express my position, and how concepts have influenced my investigation and contributions to theory-building.

3.5.3   Triangulation

Triangulation in this thesis refers to the correspondence between my experiences, observations, participant reports and interpretations of these (Stake, 2005). During the research, I actively clarified meanings by sharing my observations with staff, and asking questions across a range of staff involved. Although Saldana (2009) recommends repeating this procedure until correspondence is achieved, I followed Silverman's (2011) method to identify different ways particular ideas or events could be interpreted because of my focus on giving rich insight into the issues. During the writing of the thesis, triangulation was used by incorporating multiple data sources and theories into the themes. I cycled through interview transcripts, matrix displays,

models, field notes and my conceptual framework whilst refining each theme. Full-text searches of electronic documents facilitated this process.

3.6 Conclusion

This chapter has focused on how the research design evolved, whilst maintaining theoretical, empirical and ethical oversight to ensure that the methods adopted enabled me to respond to the research question. Events beyond my control impacted substantially on the case study selection, methods and outcomes. Despite these events, the methodology maintained my focus on understanding the contributions of ICT to learning and accountability within and between donors, CSOs and their beneficiaries, from situated and critical perspectives. The preceding sections emphasise the rationale and procedures I applied when adapting the research methods in an ethical and appropriate way. This chapter emphasises the importance of comparing perspectives of individuals and organisations in context to give rich insight into the meanings and uses of ICT for learning and accountability. The following chapters present the case studies. Each case study contains one contextual chapter and two analytical chapters.

CASE STUDY 1

ICTS WITHIN DFID's GOVERNANCE AND TRANSPARENCY FUND AND GENDER LINKS

Chapter 4

THE CONTEXT OF ICT, LEARNING AND ACCOUNTABILITY IN CASE STUDY 1

The first case study explores the use of ICTs in the relationship between DFID's Governance and Transparency Fund (GTF) and Gender Links, a Southern African regional CSO. This chapter presents essential background information to contextualise the actors, highlighting areas where ICT interventions might be pertinent for learning and accountability. The next two chapters then analyse in detail the contributions that ICTs have indeed contributed to learning and accountability in these organisations.

4.1 DFID's Governance and Transparency Fund

The Governance and Transparency Fund (GTF) was a £ 130 million one-time five-year fund between 2008 and 2013 that has now ended. The overarching development objective of the fund was to enable citizens to hold their governments to account (KPMG, 2011). The GTF was created based on the assumptions that transparency and accountability lead to better governance (DFID, 2012b). Better governance, according to DFID, is a key predictor of poverty reduction. Strengthening civil society groups is crucial to improving on these aspects in developing countries, as part of DFID's rationale for working with CSOs is because they are able to "*reach parts of society that are otherwise unreachable*" (DFID Civil Servant). However, there are two key aspects of DFID's institutional and historical

context that are needed to understand this case. First, as part of a wider development aid system, DFID has demonstrated both significant reform and contradictions in its policies, especially where ICT is concerned. Second, DFID's support to CSOs has changed dramatically over the years, which significantly affects relationship conditions. The end of this section draws together these characteristics to situate the GTF within this context.

According to OECD statistics, DFID was the third largest provider of international aid at the time of my research (data retrieved from data.oecd.org on March 14, 2017). Riddell (2007) reported that UK aid was one of only three, of the top nine providers, basing aid on poverty alleviation. However, it is widely argued that non-development aspects, such as former colonial ties or the global war on terror, may influence DFID's aid giving as well (Browne, 2006; Koch *et al.*, 2008; Easterly and Williamson, 2012). Likewise, DFID's institutional context is structured by international and legislative commitments. For example, this research took place during a distinctive period within the aid system, when the Millennium Development Goals ended and the Sustainable Development Goals were being negotiated. The Millennium Development Goals established key objectives and discourses in international development (Hulme, 2009), which DFID adopted. These objectives therefore set the framework against which to base funding decisions. The process to improve *aid effectiveness* has also cemented key discourses and principles in the development aid system (Hyden, 2008; Gore, 2013).

In contrast, DFID's institutional IT policy seemed to contradict its development commitments to poverty reduction and responsiveness to aid recipients. Its IT policy between 2011 and 2015 intended to increase "reliance on the efficient management of its information technology (IT) and business processes in order to support an increased aid budget while undergoing significant reductions in administrative

expenditure" (DFID, 2012a, p.3). It stated having limited funding for new systems, and would make improvements according to DFID's business priorities, rather than development objectives. Furthermore, they made no provisions for staff support. Although one staff member in Kenya has published on his experience becoming a *digital ninja* (Vowles, 2016), my research demonstrates the impact a lack of technical support had on the GTF practitioners.

Furthermore, DFID's support to CSOs is not a core business priority, which has a marginalising effect for this aspect within the Department. It is also difficult to analyse DFID's support to civil society longitudinally, because its aid instruments for CSOs change rapidly. Comparing my research to Wallace (1999), and Riddell (2007), drastic differences in the structure and purposes of funding programmes have occurred. In 2005, almost half of all UK aid to CSOs went to five large UK based CSOs (Oxfam, Save the Children, VSO, Christian Aid and CAFOD). A noticeable shift happened following donor commitments to harmonised approaches after the Paris Declaration in 2005. According to Giffen and Judge (2010, p.8) "there is greater focus on engaging with southern civil society from all donors, and several bilateral donors are now stating an express purpose to strengthen southern civil society rather than just use northern NGOs and their partners to deliver development outcomes." Many donors expressly intended to develop direct relationships with CSOs in developing countries. For DFID, funding to Southern CSOs happens primarily through decentralised country offices. The DFID Civil Servant involved in my research confirmed that approximately half of DFID's funds to civil society are now channelled through these country offices. This means that centralised funds to civil society were the exception, not the rule when I was researching with the Department.

For the GTF specifically, DFID's reason for having the centralised fund was to learn about governance practices and to share this knowledge with country offices, but as Sub-Section 4.3.2 details further, this rationale was difficult to effect. Nevertheless, the GTF provides a unique opportunity to investigate the role of ICT in development aid relationships because the primary means of sharing knowledge and strengthening accountability is carried out at a distance through ICT. Almost half (16 of 35) of the GTF recipients are headquartered in developing countries, and recipient profiles range from local and regional CSOs, to media and universities. The criteria for programme selection were based on technical merit primarily, achieving a balance across geographic areas and types of CSOs and media groups, and the treatment of priority themes and cross-cutting issues (see Figure 4-1; KPMG, 2011).

Figure 4-1 Geographic distribution of GTF programmes (in dark blue)
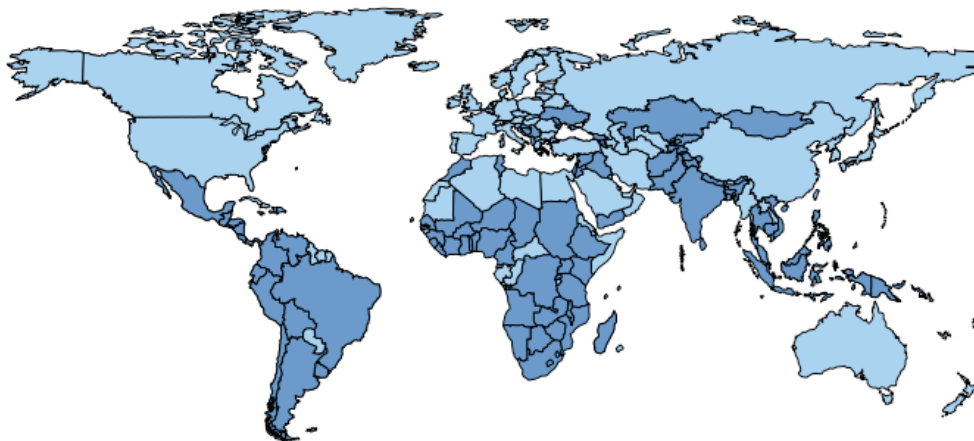
Source: KPMG (2011, p.11)

4.2   Gender Links

Gender Links, headquartered in Johannesburg, South Africa, was a GTF recipient. It "is committed to a region in which women and men are able to participate equally in all aspects of public and private life in accordance with the provisions of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) Protocol on Gender and Development" (Gender Links, 2015 n.p.). The organisation seeks to increase equality through policy and legislative frameworks, capacity building and advocacy. The organisation was founded in 2000 by Colleen Lowe Morna who continues to act as Chief Executive Officer (CEO). Within ten years the organisation grew from two staff members and a budget of 250 000 ZAR (around £ 16,300) to a staff of 40 and a budget of almost 30 million ZAR (close to £ 2 million). This sub-section introduces Gender Links by situating its approach and structure within the literature on development CSOs.

Two important trends in CSO development are important to understand Gender Links' rapid growth and structure. Firstly, while there was a rapid increase in aid given directly to CSOs during the 1980s and 1990s (Howell and Pearce, 2001), it was primarily during the 1990s that CSOs came under fire for lacking professionalism and effectiveness (Edwards and Hulme, 1995). CSOs thus needed to demonstrate capacity to manage large amounts of money, and to produce evidence of effect through rigorous monitoring and evaluation (Ebrahim, 2003b). In its early stages, Gender Links focused primarily on media intervention, establishing a reputation through research studies that it conducted and by providing training for media houses and media practitioners. Gender Links produced key publications including the *Southern African Media Training Needs Assessment* study (Gender Links, 2001) and the *Gender and Media Baseline Study* (Gender Links, 2003).

Gender Links' educated, professional staff, capable of producing insightful empirical research therefore had a legitimising effect for the organisation.

The second trend relates to the influence of dominant CSO management theories and practices. There is a vast literature on management for development CSOs (Fowler, 1997; Edwards and Fowler, 2002; Anheier, 2014; Claeyé, 2014). This thesis is not designed to address nuances in conceptual origins and implications of management theory, but it is useful to acknowledge the contributions of this body of knowledge to outline normative indicators of common CSO governance structures and operational strategies. Normative benchmarks, such as Fowler's (1997) outline of the relationship between management structure and participatory development (see Table 4-1), often stem from corporate management ideas and practices, but incorporate links to social change and people centred development processes.

Table 4-1 Relationships in power distribution and participation

Shared identity	Leadership	Trust	Authority	Controls	Flexibility	Effect on participation
Strong	Consultative	High	Decentralised	Relaxed	High	Positive
Weak	Autocratic	Low	Centralised	Firm	Low	Negative

Source: Fowler (1997, p.75).

The most relevant normative trend in CSO management for Gender Links, relates to recommended scales of operation. There are different views on effective scales, with Fowler (1997) simply outlining some micro-macro linking strategies, whereas Korten (1987) argued more firmly in favour of CSOs developing *strategic competencies* to leverage their resources to influence wider socio-political systems. More recently, Balboa (2014) has argued that a greater concern is whether strategic competencies have overshadowed CSOs' local relevance. For Gender Links, its decision to operate regionally occurred in 2005 with the establishment of the

Southern African Gender Protocol Alliance. At this pivotal point, Gender Links led an internationally-recognised civil society campaign. Consequently, members of the SADC signed and ratified the SADC Protocol on Gender and Development, which is shortened to the SADC Protocol in the remainder of the thesis (Lowe Morna, Glenwright and Hakimi, 2011). The success of this campaign led the organisation to refocus its mission to work towards achieving the targets of the Protocol including governance and justice (focused on eliminating violence against women and girls) into their programmes. Gender Links, whose primary mission had been of gender equality in and through the media, could then legitimate its work in terms of coalition building and regional policy influence. Thus, Gender Links' regional success coincided with the trend for CSOs to emphasise policy-level change to influence social transformation.

There have been both pros and cons with regional approaches. The SADC consists of 15 countries in the region (Figure 4-2), and argues that there are cross-cutting challenges that can be improved through regional cooperation (SADC, 2001). However, development problems and appropriate solutions vary greatly. For instance, apartheid in South Africa and the civil war in Mozambique create drastically different socio-political contexts. Adult literacy rates in Angola and Mozambique are above 50% whilst other member states have adult literacy rates as low as 20%. Whilst contextualised approaches are likely needed to address these differences, the SADC considers gender inequality, education and training, employment and labour, and health and nutrition amenable to regional cooperation (SADC, 2001). Gender Links therefore seeks to influence state governments through monitoring the SADC Protocol, but it also operates in each of the 15 countries to engage citizens and partner organisations, akin to Fowler's (1997) micro/macro linked approach. Thus,

there are multiple potential roles for ICT, such as, keeping track of government progress, to link satellite offices, and to engage citizens and partners directly.

Figure 4-2 Map of the Southern African Development Community

Source: SADC (2001, p.2).

Table 4-2 outlines the goals of the four main Gender Links programmes I observed. The SADC Protocol Alliance monitors state level policy change, and citizen satisfaction. The two largest programmes, media and governance, are both modelled on a Centre of Excellence logic. Local government councils and media houses follow a standardised training programme designed to accompany these institutions through a gender mainstreaming process (Gender Links, 2012a). The gender justice programme consisted of research to produce gender-based violence baselines in three countries (Machisa, Jewkes, Lowe Morna and Rama, 2011; Machisa and Virahsawmy, 2012; Machisa and van Dorp, 2012). Gender Links was

also developing programmes to address economic empowerment with women citizens directly, which was rolled out in 2013 after I had departed.

Table 4-2. Summary of Gender Links programmes at the time of study

Programme	Goals of the Programme
SADC Gender Protocol Alliance	Governments demonstrate commitment to achieving gender equality by 2015 through the adoption, ratification and implementation of the SADC Protocol on Gender and Development Civil society organisations, and the women's movement in particular, is strengthened through the campaign for the adoption of the Protocol and its implementation. Citizens, especially women, become aware of, and are empowered to claim their rights and make demands of their governments through the SADC Gender Protocol campaign.
Gender and Governance	Media reporting on women's political participation is enhanced and women decision-makers are empowered to use the media for advancing gender equality. An increase in women's representation and participation in national and local politics, especially in countries where this is still very low, in line with the SADC target of 50% women in all areas of decision-making by 2015.
Gender Justice	National and local action plans to end gender violence are developed; publicised; tested; given a human face; implemented and tracked leading to a reduction in this human rights abuse in line with the SADC Gender Protocol target of halving gender violence by 2015.
Gender and Media	Citizens are empowered to engage critically with gender and the media through media literacy. There is steady progress in achieving the SADC target of equal representation of women and men in and through the media

Source: Adapted from Gender Links GTF Inception Report (Lowe Morna, 2009).

In 2013, Gender Links received the majority of its funds from two bilateral donors, and received the rest of its funds from 15 other donors (Figure 4-3). The GTF enabled Gender Links to gain a DFID Partnership Programme Arrangement (PPA) in 2010. DFID therefore contributed 29% of its total income. However, Lowe Morna stated that donors are offering fewer opportunities to regional organisations — which is a main reason why Gender Links has concentrated on opening satellite offices in programme countries:

Out of the 10 countries we have, 5 have succeeded in raising in country funds. So we know these countries, even if the rest of Gender Links disintegrated, that work can continue... Cause we deliberately

> *decentralised three years ago, in order to tap in country funds* (Lowe
>
> Morna, CEO)*.*

In contrast to the literature which recommends increasing micro/macro oversight, funding trends seem increasingly focused on local initiatives. Furthermore, this quotation is important because it illustrates that Gender Links' approach to decentralisation is focused on fundraising, rather than delegating power. This theme is continued in Section 4.4.2. However, I return first to the main learning and accountability themes identified from DFID's perspective.

Figure 4-3 Diversity of Gender Links' donors
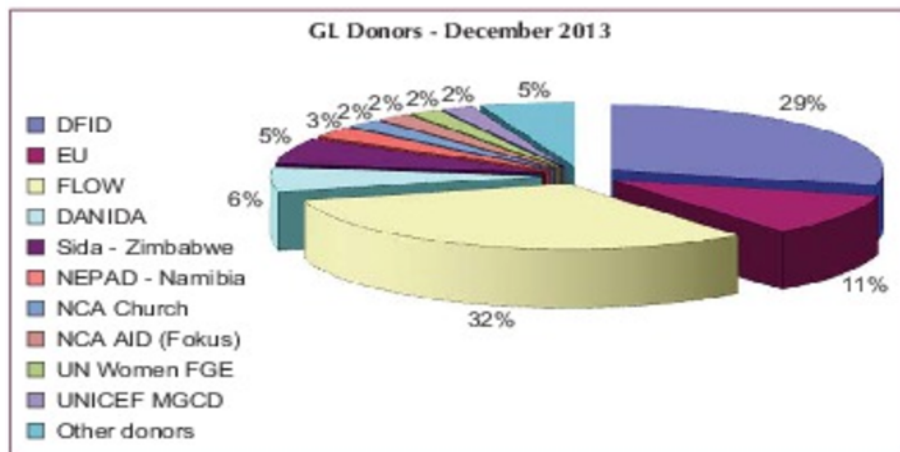
Source: Gender Links (2014).

4.3 ICTs and the evolution of learning and accountability within the GTF

The next two sections draw out implications for investigating ICT at DFID by establishing the main learning and accountability themes within the GTF case study. This section focuses on DFID's perspective of learning and accountability within the GTF, and how the GTF evolved over the course of the programme. Understanding

the actors, the evolution of the Fund, and the hierarchy of knowing and doing helps to disentangle the specific contributions of ICTs in chapters 5 and 6.

When I encountered the GTF in 2012, the programme had recently undergone its mid-term evaluation. Thirteen out of 38 programmes were given *amber* performance ratings denoting that they required more serious monitoring (KPMG, 2011). Four were given *red* ratings, meaning they were required to undergo close examination with extensive overhaul or termination of their agreement. For the GTF, three programmes were terminated as a result of the performance ratings. Some of the under-performers were believed to be on track, but it was too soon for results to be shown (KPMG, 2011). Other programmes required greater assistance and support with technical management and programme design (KPMG, 2011). My interviews with the DFID Civil Servant responsible for overseeing the GTF were crucial to understanding how the GTF was unfolding.

Understanding how these figures compare to DFID's other civil society funds could be facilitated through a more sophisticated use of ICT, as DFID has committed to publishing more documentation online through its transparency guarantee (DFID, 2013). Yet, Section 5.1 explores how there were many disparate locations of programme information as DFID continued to develop and migrate its Web services after 2013. Programme information for civil society funds is available primarily in electronic documents, which makes this information harder to compare because each document must be downloaded and consulted individually. Moreover, the link to the only report that might contain performance ratings for the Global Poverty Action Fund does not work, likely due to website migration errors.[2] Hence, it is not possible

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[2] https://www.gov.uk/government/admin/publications/588210 attempted access multiple times until April 10, 2017

to monitor certain aspects of DFID's work through online resources alone. Nor is it clear how normal it is for CSO programmes to be given such performance ratings.

There were also significant changes over the course of the GTF that would not be possible to gather by consulting project documentation online. Initially, the Fund was shaped by an interpretive/practice-based development approach. The Civil Servant outlined the main purpose of the Fund initially during an interview in May, 2012, at DFID's London headquarters. He explained:

> *[It] had no overall logical framework, no theory of change, the fund itself had a broad objective and criteria… So it was very unfocused, incredibly wide, the individual projects didn't have to have any prescribed way of reporting, no template, no standard indicators, something that the individual projects had to report against, which was deliberate to encourage new and different ideas, flexible in the way that people do things.*

The lack of mandated reporting formats was meant to encourage innovation and contextually relevant practices. Such flexibility implies that ICT must be responsive, because there are no mandated information needs to inform functionality requirements at the outset. As such, ICT needs can be accommodated through practice, or by considering the types of activities it may potentially support. However, as the next two sections demonstrate, two interactions between learning and accountability explain why reflective practice did not drive ICT use in this case. The first stems from the relationship accountability properties, which changed over time due to shifting priorities. The second relates to the interaction between accountability concerns and the learning process. The following two sub-sections treat these findings separately.

4.3.1   The shifting prioritisation of accountability relationships

Actors may prioritise certain accountability relationships over others as a reflection of the dominance of the actor (Ebrahim, 2007). However, my research shows that as the GTF progressed, relationship priorities changed. These changing priorities affected the design and management of learning processes significantly. The implications of shifting priorities, as Chapter 5 shows further, is that the planning and implementation required to meet the needs of DFID staff and CSO recipients through ICT is diminished.

The Civil Servant responsible for the GTF was based at DFID's offices in Scotland, which I visited for three days before my departure to South Africa in September, 2012. I was not allowed to remain in the DFID building unaccompanied due to security restrictions. The Civil Servant had frequent meetings, so I waited in a coffee shop across the street. Overseeing the GTF was a small but significant portion of his responsibilities. His main role was to oversee the work of KPMG, a private consulting firm contracted to manage the GTF:

when the fund was set up… It was beneficial to DFID to have as few civil servants involved as possible, we were meant to be cutting back... So the big aspiration for DFID was for the fund to be managed by external fund managers.

…Within days of me coming in, the whole set of aspirations was changing. So there was a real need to build up on what lessons could be learned (some would say that it was always there, and it hadn't been clearly recognised within people managing the fund, they'd been too concerned that civil servant time was reduced, and took their eye off the ball. Others

would say that the fund started and after getting it going, saw the potential)

and used by DFID (DFID Civil Servant)*.*

DFID's choice to substitute civil servant time with private management consulting services reflects the view that privatisation increases efficiency and quality of of government activities (Megginson and Netter, 2001). It assumes that profit-seeking behaviour leads to costs-savings, and greater attention to 'customer satisfaction' (Megginson and Netter, 2001). However, as Figure 4-4 shows, pleasing 'customers' is complex, as there are a number of independent bodies, partners, recipients and citizens who all demand accountability. Furthermore, developing ICT capable of facilitating multiple accountability relationships inclusively may not be profitable, which reduces the likelihood that profit-seekers will focus on providing essential ICT infrastructure for marginalised actors.

Figure 4-4 The DFID Civil Servant's diagram of the Governance and Transparency's accountability processes
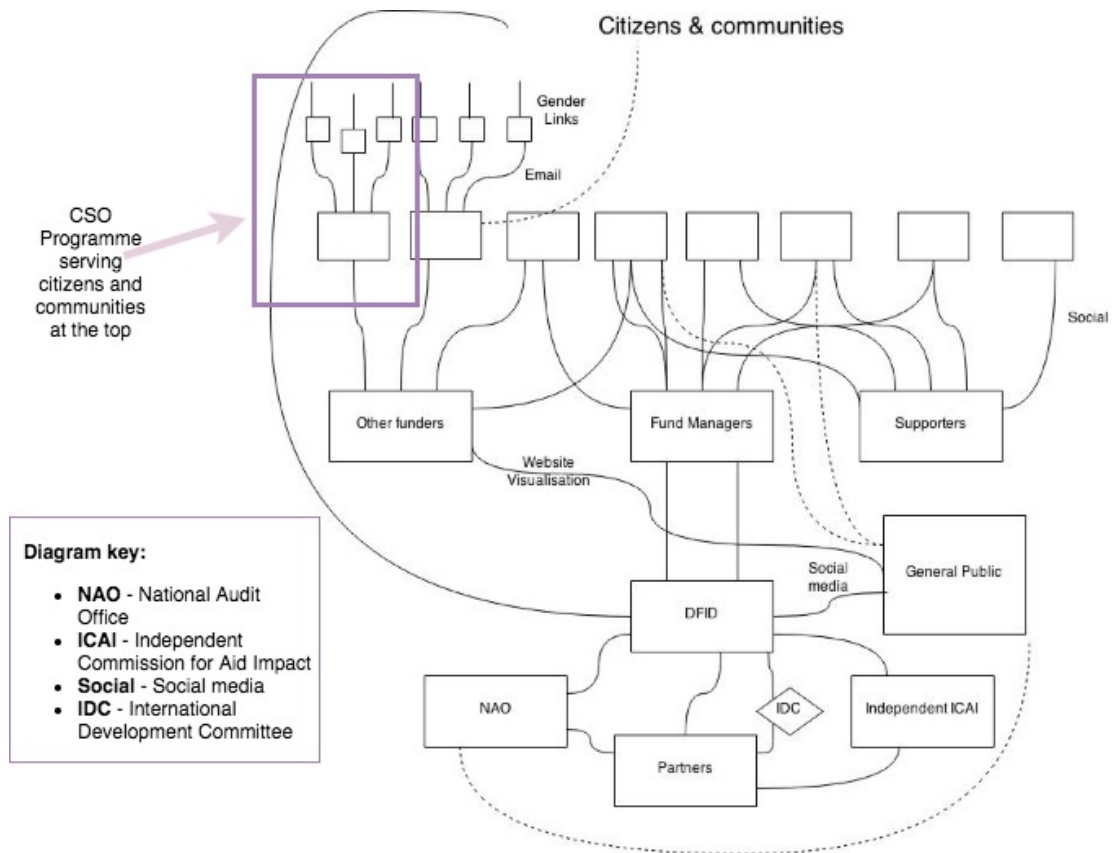
Source: redrawn image of Civil Servant's accountability diagram (see Appendix 10).

In Figure 4-4, DFID is not directly connected to CSOs (pictured by the small boxes along the top) or the citizens and communities (along the very top on the top left). It is clear that the size and range of the programme makes developing individually responsive relationships between DFID and the CSOs problematic. Thus, the Civil Servant's approach to managing the GTF fits a typical principal-agent accountability relationship with KPMG. His role to oversee KPMG was focused on four key areas stipulated within the contract: financial management, programme management, lesson learning, and understanding impact. The first two areas emphasise accountability, whilst the second two emphasise learning. ICT is implicitly seen as something that cuts across all of these areas, as evidenced by "email",

"social media" and "website" strewn across the diagram. However, a programmatic ICT strategy was not made explicit.

The problem with managing the GTF according to managerial principles was that KPMG was not initially hired to deliver on both learning and accountability areas of work, and did not seem appropriate for the task:

> *I also now recognise that we probably set unrealistic expectations on the capacity of the Fund Managers to deliver on certain areas of work. They needed to deliver lessons learned for internal DFID staff, guessing what was needed and getting it wrong. [This] needs much stronger DFID involvement. That was one factor, the other one is that I'm not sure we've chosen the right fund manager to do the job. We probably selected them as competent bureaucratic fund managers, instead of research scientists* (DFID Civil Servant)*.*

Muir and Rowley (2014) argued in their final evaluation of the GTF that the learning focus needed to be incorporated much earlier into the portfolio management. These conclusions are evident in retrospect. However, it did not seem clear at the time. It was evident that DFID's civil servants are crucial actors who may be better positioned than KPMG to balance multiple accountabilities and interests. Yet, the failure to recognise the learning needs of different actors represents the deficiency of the principle-agent model of accountability to address both learning and ICT needs inclusively. Section 5.1 explores this further, and shows that ICTs require more planning and investment for donor and CSO practitioners to thrive. Whereas, Chapter 6 investigates the potential for ICT to support more responsive, participatory forms of accountability throughout the aid chain.

4.3.2   Reducing the complexity of the learning process

Planning and investing in ICT was also complicated by the complex learning process of the GTF. Learning to embrace complexity, as Ramalingam (2013) has argued, enables emergent development learning designs which do not impose exogenous development ideas and practices onto CSOs. It also implies that flexible ICTs are needed to adapt to emergent needs. However, accountability contexts outline boundaries and limits within which learning unfolds. The GTF experience shows how it is usually the accountability context that influences learning and not the other way around. Furthermore, accountability concerns are more stable, which is important to consider when trying to understand the meanings actors attach to ICT.

The predominance of the accountability context comes to light by examining the DFID Civil Servant's learning process diagram (Figure 4-5), which shows how the learning process is based on the accountability relationship structure, whilst hoping that DFID can glean some lessons out of programme reports. He said,

> *When it comes to analysing the outcomes and lessons learned, it becomes very difficult. There are 35 projects, so one would assume one would be able to get out some lessons, but the overlap is very limited.*

> *…[The Fund Managers] need to ensure all these lines happen because it's not a foregone conclusion that they do this step. They could just do that, but forget about the learning bit [pointing at the impact/results box].*

Generating lessons by comparing programmes is consistent with King and McGrath's (2013) remark that donors expect that generalised knowledge will inform future practice. It also sees ICT as a means for donors to perform macro-level analysis. This view is consistent with technical ways of knowing and doing. The Civil Servant

called the outputs of the learning processes *"synthesised learning products,"* which shows a tendency to view the ultimate purpose of the learning process as a production line of *"synthesised lessons."* This interpretation of learning restrains the meanings and uses of ICT in support of empowerment, that focus on facilitating negotiation or consensus-building for instance.

Figure 4-5 The DFID Civil Servant's GTF learning process diagram
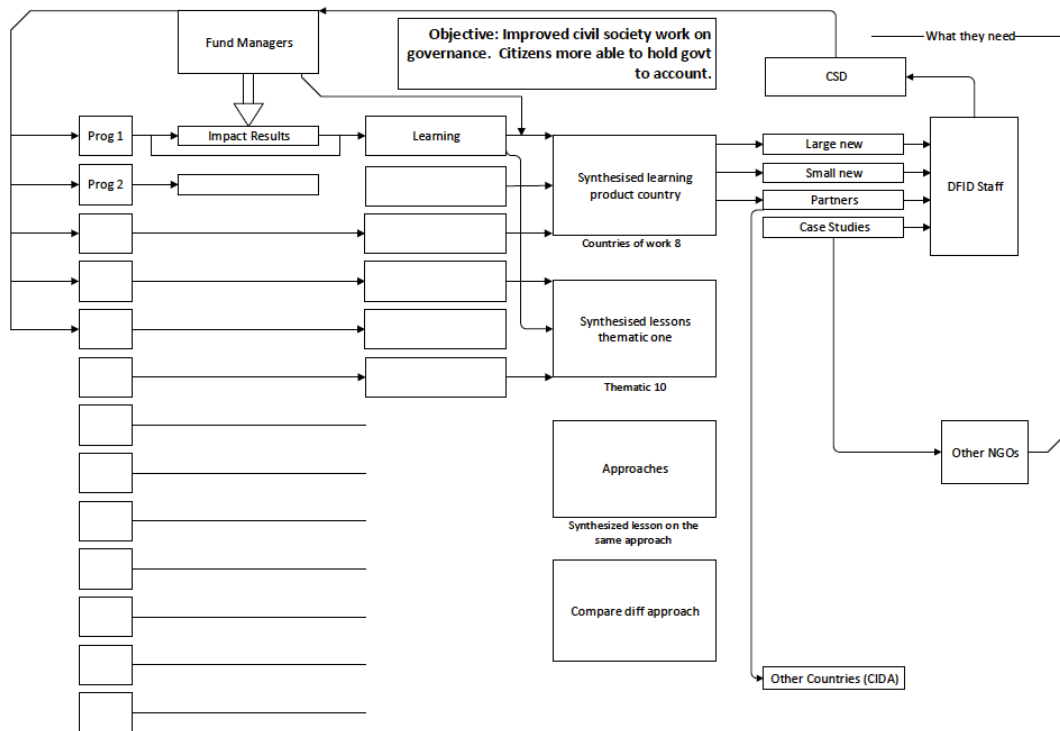
Source: Computer-redrawn image of the DFID Civil Servant's learning diagram (see Appendix 10).

However, generating lessons across programmes was far more challenging than DFID anticipated, and the Fund Managers needed to facilitate this. At first, avoiding the imposition of structure onto the programmes was meant to encourage innovation, but the lack of information-sharing structure increased the complexity of drawing comparisons. To resolve this difficulty, consensus building amongst

recipients was initially attempted through meetings, but proved too problematic to implement effectively. *"There were too many voices. Too hard to prioritise"* (DFID Civil Servant). Supporting this process through ICT was not explored. The Fund Manager then created a theory of change for the GTF by adapting the approach of DFID's other funding arrangements to civil society, namely the Programme Partnership Arrangement (PPA) and the Global Poverty Action Fund to form (KPMG, 2011). The GTF theory of change repositioned the Fund to deliver results based on its broad objectives, and to report on specific learning themes (DFID, 2009). The decision to restructure programmes along these lines points to a commitment to the technical/managerial side of knowing and doing. The way through which this also emphasises the use of ICT to produce reports in specific formats is investigated further in Section 5.2.

In contrast, interpretive/practice-based ways of knowing and doing continued to guide learning processes in the field. Yet, there were no further provisions for the use of ICT to support these processes. According to a report that was compiled for the purpose of learning about the tools, methods and approaches that were used across GTF programmes, Burge (2010, p.13) wrote:

> GTF programmes need to be prepared to challenge their own assumptions and regularly re-visit these assumptions, and even the theory as a whole, if they do not appear to be relevant to a particular context.

In situations where innovation is sought, iterations between action, sensing, and reflecting are needed to understand emergent patterns and thus what activities and responses are suited to the context of influence (Snowden, 2005). However, the decision to use tested methods to articulate impact and results they intended to see

prioritised resolving technical/managerial issues, which solidified the main use of ICTs in terms of compiling reports.

Overall, the tendency for the GTF to shift back and forth between accountability concerns, whilst utilising both technical/managerial and interpretive/practice-based methods to learn, creates ambiguity regarding how ICTs contribute. The Civil Servant believed that the learning process was designed inadequately for DFID's learning purposes initially. However, by later focusing entirely on DFID's learning product needs, the richness of the learning that evolved within the programmes through practice tended to be under-valued, which in this case significantly shaped the role of ICT. The next section turns to Gender Links' approach to learning and accountability.

4.4   ICTs and the context of learning and accountability at Gender Links

This section draws out three essential themes to understand Gender Links' approach to the use of ICTs in learning and accountability. The first sub-section focuses on Gender Links' formal organisational learning approach. The second sub-section then draws on participatory modelling interviews with staff to compare how learning and accountability unfolds in practice. The last sub-section establishes through observations and interviews how target-driven practice was a dominant accountability practice trend that shaped learning and ICT use substantially. These three perspectives on the official, informal and productivity focused lens of learning and accountability frame the contributions of ICTs in Chapters 5 and 6.

4.4.1   Gender Links' Results for Change Framework

Formal representations of organisational learning and accountability are exemplified by Gender Links' *Results for Change* framework (Rama, 2012), which explicitly states the logical, ideological, and theoretical underpinnings of how their organisation approaches monitoring and evaluation, knowledge, learning, innovation, and institutional effectiveness. I examine this framework, focusing especially on the implications for ICT, and the main explanations of how Gender Links developed it by Lowe Morna, CEO. I will later contrast these explanations with staff perceptions of learning and accountability in Sub-Section 4.4.2.

The *Results for Change* framework was mentioned in virtually all formal and informal staff meetings at Gender Links. All staff had tasks and responsibilities to contribute towards it. Figure 4-6 is taken from the Results for Change manual and shows relationships between the different components of Gender Links programmes. The second part of the manual, explains how each of these components contribute to knowledge, learning and innovation in explicit terms. I emphasise three characteristics of this framework critical to understanding the implications for ICT: 1) reporting on the activity outputs and outcomes are pre-determined; 2) the impact column denotes separate research activities that are conducted at periodic intervals, and many of these outputs are published and widely distributed as part of their programmatic activities; and 3) the manual focuses on the methods and means for collecting evidence, and presents a regimented reporting schedule that staff must follow.

Figure 4-6 Gender Links' Results for Change framework
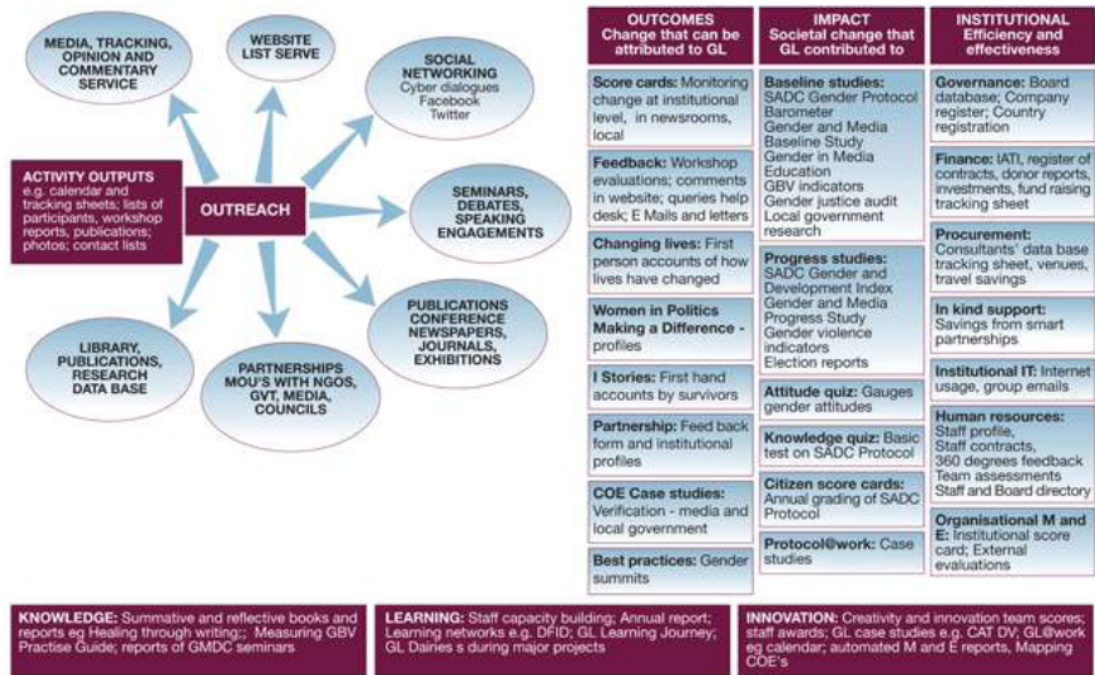
Source: Rama (2012, p.6).

The learning and accountability characteristics of the framework outline structured rules and methods for the use of ICT within the organisation. The framework falls into a technical/managerial system of knowing and doing because learning, knowledge and innovation are terms that are used to underpin development learning and organisational learning independently of staff and stakeholders. ICT is perceived to facilitate objective information analysis through formally planned procedures. Furthermore, the framework outlines a list of categorical reports and staff members who are responsible for overseeing each activity along with the person the form should be sent to verify the information. This is consistent with a hierarchical form of accountability focused on controllability, and outlines checks and

balances to engineer within ICT systems. ICT strategy therefore emanates from planned intervention to support organisational procedures.

Gender Links attributes much of the way in which they developed the framework to working with DFID through the GTF. However, it was important to Lowe Morna to explain that their organisation's view of learning and accountability is not only contextualised to the influence of donors but also focuses on those that the organisation intended to influence. As Lowe Morna stated:

In terms of why are we sort of so strong on this, evidence and the evidence base… I think to some extent, yes, it is our funders and donors involved and so on, but I think it's also about where Gender Links has come from. I think we have to go back to the roots of this organisation. The roots of this organisation are media work.

She told me a story about one of her greatest successes, when she called out male journalists who denied that media practices were marginalising to women. They needed facts to confront media actors. Her desire to build up institutional systems to produce material that could be used in their programmatic work, as well as to demonstrate their performance to donors was ideal for addressing both donor requirements and producing bodies of knowledge advocating for their cause. However, in both cases, the implications for ICT are similar because tools and methods are arranged and directed by management. The next sub-section explores how this framework unfolds in practice.

4.4.2 How Gender Links staff interpret learning and accountability

Climbing every mountain was a phrase that was used to affirm the approaches taken to confront obstacles the organisation encountered daily. Drawing primarily from participatory modelling interviews, this sub-section summarises the main tensions between expectations and reality in learning and accountability practice. It also demonstrates that informal learning and situated accountability have different implications for ICT that are not planned and structured in the same way as formal organisational learning procedures. This leads to the formal technical/managerial view of ICT to take precedence in this case.

In a reflective account within Gender Links' tenth year anniversary publication, Lowe Morna wrote (Gender Links, 2011a, p.37):

> the creative tension between being an activist NGO that needs to deliver or die, publish or perish, but at the same time be spontaneous, responsive, able and willing to be flexible (managerialism versus activism). The media sees us as being radical; many of our feminist friends say that we are not radical enough. Evaluators would like to see more men involved in GL work (we aim and usually achieve about 30% among our beneficiaries). Some feminists say this is a cop out: why should we make overtures to men? We have tried to work through smart partnerships with other NGOs; some say this is empowering; others say we are domineering. My father was fond of saying, damned if you do, damned if you don't; I find that so true of every day in a manager's life. You offer support, you are micro-managing. You pull back, the work does not get done and then it becomes

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your headache anyway. So life becomes one long series of negotiating fine

lines. Sometimes we get them right; other times we get them so wrong.

This quotation presents a very different view of the gap between planning and practice, when compared to the language within the *Results for Change* framework. Here, she refers to the flexibility and responsiveness that is required to be successful, and that these are hard to negotiate, but both of these aspects have been important to how organisational learning and accountability is viewed by internal and external stakeholders.

When it comes to learning, *climbing every mountain* refers to Lowe Morna's vision for Gender Links' staff and stakeholders to confront obstacles that stand in the way of achieving the Gender Links mission:

> *The experience that they have, the travel they must be able to do, working*
>
> *in different cultures and contexts, responsibilities that they get, from the*
>
> *most junior upwards are huge. And we try to build that also into how we do*
>
> *things. The whole [Centre of Excellence] process is about learning on the*
>
> *job. It's about saying your best learning is going to come by working with*
>
> *your own problem, your own solutions, your own skills that you need to*
>
> *resolve those problems* (Lowe Morna, CEO)*.*

As opposed to the *Results for Change* framework this view portrays the importance of the interpretive/practice-based system of knowing and doing to learning because she says the *best* learning happens when staff and stakeholders are empowered to solve their own problems.

In practice, tensions arise from interactions between this learning ideal and the hierarchical accountability institutional properties. These tensions create

subjectivity in the meanings and uses of ICTs. I flesh these tensions out below by first explaining how two programme managers (of the three interviewed) provide insight into how programme-level learning processes typically unfold. Then, I examine individual perspectives to show that feedback is a key interpretive/practice-based process that framed the way that most staff used to learn on the job. ICTs are then perceived primarily in support of feedback.

The first tension stems from vague limits within which learning on the job is appropriate at Gender Links. For Joyful, a programme manager, ICT enables maintaining "eyes and ears on the ground" (Figure 4-7) between satellite offices and headquarters. Joyful drew a perfect example of the co-existence of technical/managerial and interpretive/practice-based learning processes, framed by the accountability context. Her diagram (Figure 4-7) gives importance to Gender Links headquarters by placing it at the top. Furthermore, learning is typically skewed by directives from headquarters:

> *Most of the decision-making rests with the CEO because ultimately she is*
>
> *the one that has to account to the donors… [The facilitators] need a certain*
>
> *amount of flexibility because they are on the ground and they're working in*
>
> *different contexts and they understand what would work in their country*
>
> *and what won't work so at this point it's sort of a two-way process.*

Joyful's reflections point out that although learning is ideally a two-way process, decision-making ultimately falls into the hands of the CEO. Thus, there are limits on the delegation of power to the country staff. Since ICT is the primary means by which communication between headquarters and country offices is maintained, these limits may shape staff perceptions of the use of ICT for learning.

Figure 4-7 An example of concurrent, separated learning processes between country offices and headquarters
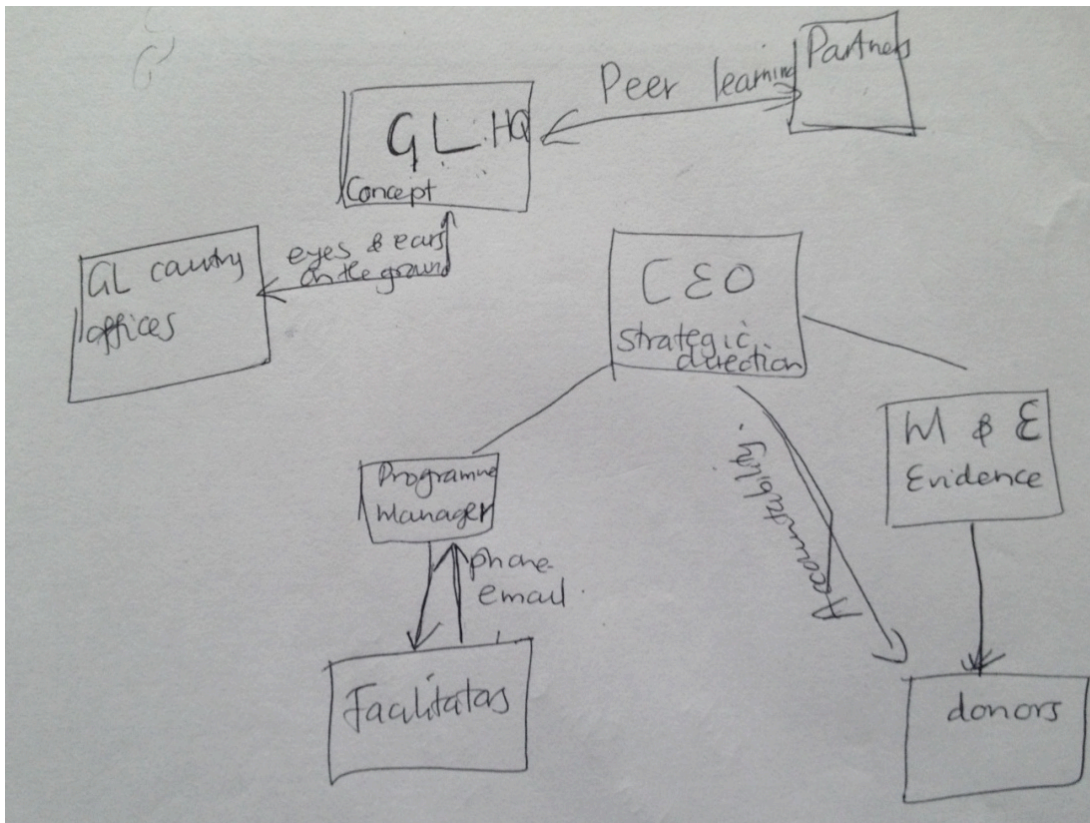
Source: Joyful, programme manager.

The second tension relates to the dominance of the technical/managerial system within the organisation. As noted above, the uses of ICT are clearly outlined within the Results for Change framework. These formal uses of ICT also shape staff perceptions, because ICTs are not emphasised as a means to solve ones' own problems. Anesu, also a programme manager, interpreted the design of M&E to transmit data to the cloud at the top, where experts and managers analyse information to make decisions (Figure 4-8). The interpretation of ICTs as objective tools for analysis is thus apparent. She felt constrained in relation to her control over learning and practice:

you end up just doing the same thing and being blanket and saying you know this is what we said to do, but yet there would be opportunities to further develop the method, and also an opportunity to just grow in terms of your knowledge, so that your knowledge is broad […]. I mean, it's just managing and running with donor targets.

In the above, Anesu feels that the technical/managerial systems in place may be neglectful of important learning opportunities, but that the technical/managerial system is prioritised. Whilst she may feel confident in her abilities to adopt ICTs to address her own problems, she does not display a sense of inter-subjectivity in the use of ICTs within the accountability context.

Figure 4-8 A depiction of technical learning priorities driven by managers and experts

Process I
GL Management   Consultations   Experts
funds available develop strategy / indicators   Inputs
Development
Desktop research / Reviewing (journals / developing best practices)   Regional Indicators !!!   Create portfolio   GL M&E Project
Regional Manager, Regional Sites   ?? Regional / Country Staff Support   Zimbabwe Co-ordinator & intern, none for others
Implementation
Civil society   Implementation   Govts
Outputs

Source: Anesu, programme manager.

The effects of these tensions on staff perceptions of their own learning processes has further implications for ICT. Interviewed staff showed good understandings of how the organisation works, operationally speaking, and the utility of their M&E systems to support development learning and learning about organisational practice. Their respective learning process diagrams, however, are more focused on feedback and communication in terms of execution of tasks (see Figure 4-9 for an example).

Figure 4-9 Learning as a feedback process
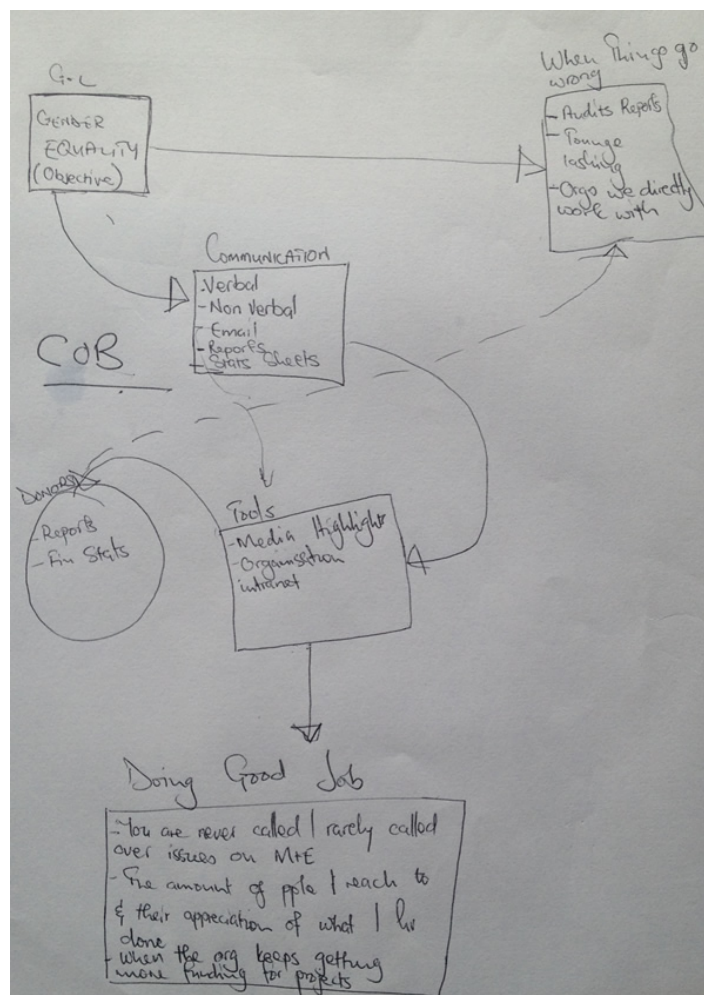
Source: Malcom, country officer.

Staff perceived a strong need to seek constant feedback and approval when learning is situated within Gender Links' accountability context. As Pamela, a country manager, reflected:

For me I think I want constant feedback. From my supervisor, from my peers, from my partners. They shouldn't wait until I do something wrong. And then also coaching. I need someone to coach me for certain things. To say OK, you are doing this very well but if you did it this way, you'd do it better and more efficient.

Perceiving learning primarily as feedback from managers demonstrates the dominance of hierarchical accountability. Learning then supports staff to develop positive conceptualisations of themselves in the eyes of the organisation. ICT shapes this dynamic because it enables frequent communication between headquarters and satellite offices. However, Chapters 5 and 6 both demonstrate that there were many other consequences of ICT use that detracted from learning through feedback.

Whilst the expectation for staff to learn on the job and contribute constructively is emphasised on the surface, all of the staff interviews demonstrated how it is pervasively understood that the dominant form of learning is encapsulated by hierarchical accountability and the technical/managerial systems. It is especially important to take this into account when examining the contributions of ICT, because activities must be examined against the practical realities that may contradict stated intentions and objectives.

4.4.3 Workload pressure and target-driven practice

This last sub-section highlights how target-driven practice structured meaning, which was a pervasive theme driving learning and accountability in this case study. The

interplay between target-driven practice and ICT has shaped learning and accountability significantly in this case.

The bustling work environment at Gender Links' headquarters is immediately noticeable. The offices are comprised of two converted houses located in Cyrildene, a Johannesburg suburb (see Figure 4-10), which is also known as Johannesburg's Chinatown, containing many shops and restaurants as well as residential homes. I rented the guest suite at Gender Links during my research at a discounted rate, so I was on-site virtually all the time except for when getting groceries or pearl tea. Observing staff working overtime and enduring stressful periods permeated this experience. The CEO's office was also next to my suite, so I could hear her car leaving late at night on most days.

Figure 4-10 Gender Links' headquarters in Cyrildene, Johannesburg

Source: Screenshot taken from Google Map's Earth feature (http://maps.google.com) on April 7, 2017.

A main reason for the fast pace of the work context is Gender Links' reliance on target-driven practice. This approach focuses staff's attention on delivering outputs. ICTs were intended to enable staff to deliver outputs quickly and on time. Gender Links had computers, laptops, mobiles and Internet connections available to help staff work flexibly. Emails frequently circulated at all hours of the day. Chapters 5 and 6 provide a detailed account of ICT practices and shows that working to meet the targets would not be possible without them. However, the interplay between targets and deadlines often left staff feeling overwhelmed and under pressure.

Staff I interviewed reported feeling under pressure to complete their work. As Anesu, a programme manager, described:

I see myself as an engine of a car. But for the engine to run it needs so many things for it to run. The radiator to be cooled, things to be oiled... At some point I think I am an engine that is... a faulty engine that is overheating, that can't... In terms of effectiveness, getting to a destination or a point, which would be the same as the targets, becomes an issue. I would want to put the water that is meant to cool the engine, as the rest. But because of that lack of rest, I'm just overheating.

Anesu's sentiments were reflected by all country officers, and the majority of headquarters staff interviewed (10 out of 17 total). Feeling under pressure to complete work was also apparent in accountability process diagrams, such as those by Antso, a country officer who felt caught between a hammer and an anvil (Figure 4-11), and Godfrey, a headquarters officer who felt like a centipede, needing a hundred legs to stand on (Figure 4-12).

Figure 4-11 Caught between the hammer and an anvil at work
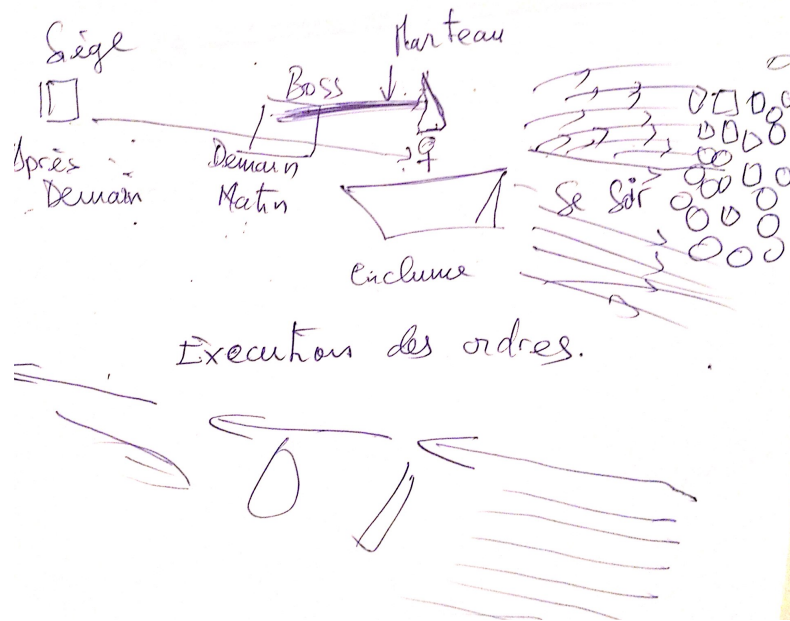
Source: Antso, country officer.

Figure 4-12 An accountability diagram that represents conflicting responsibilities
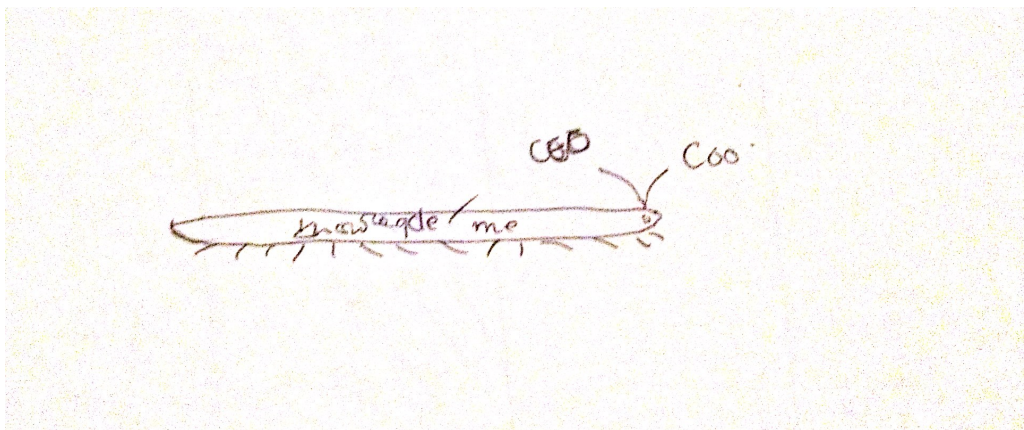
Source: Godfrey, headquarters officer.

Many staff at Gender Links simply did not think that targets set for them were realistic. It was not clear how the targets were set, or how staff influenced management's decision-making. For example, whilst I was visiting Swaziland, the country officer thought that the programme was small in relation to other countries, implying that he thought the targets were set with relatively little consideration for differences between countries. Although I was not able to determine how the targets were created, nor did I have an opinion about whether they were achievable, I certainly did not have the impression that staff were being lazy or working inefficiently. However, failing to achieve their targets contributed negatively to staff annual performance reviews. When staff received a performance evaluation between 80-100%, they received a full bonus, whilst staff who score 70-90% received a half bonus (Gender Links, 2011b). Furthermore, management has authority to withhold annual bonuses and salary increases when staff do not deliver on time (Gender Links, 2011b).

Target-driven practice anchors expectations regarding what staff should be able to accomplish. A main criticism of target-setting is that staff may not be encouraged to slow down to ensure the quality of work done, because the focus of workload is primarily on achieving the targets (Tangen, 2004). In this context, it is necessary to view ICTs in nuanced ways, because they can both add to the pressure to *climb every mountain* to deliver on time, and they can also facilitate tasks to deliver outputs more efficiently. Chapter 5 explores how ICTs for internal reporting have played a part in shaping target-driven practice, whilst Chapter 6 investigates situated ICT practices in this context.

4.5 Conclusion

The main purpose of this chapter has been to introduce the actors and the main learning and accountability themes. This provides the background for the empirical chapters that follow. It also draws out three significant observations regarding the institutional contexts of donors and CSOs, which are crucial for understanding the contributions of ICT. First, DFID is a large, complex bureaucratic institution, within which the CSO department is relatively marginalised. Contrary to the CSO development literature, which positions donors as having complete control, donors are subject to wider government and international accountability discourses and priorities. A number of institutional and international aid factors need to converge for responsiveness to CSOs to become a priority. Furthermore, DFID's institutional IT policy at the time emphasised its key business priorities, such that the GTF is even further marginalised where ICT is concerned.

Second, the relationship between Gender Links and DFID is unique because funds do not pass through intermediary organisations or through DFID country offices. Gender Links faced pressure and support to develop its Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) system in a way that transmits results, thus aligning with legitimated procedures accepted by DFID. However, Gender Links adamantly argues that its own technical/managerial learning framework is critical to influence Southern African state policy, key to their development approach. As such, understanding ICT in development aid relationships is contingent on both the development approach and on upward accountability requirements. Taken together, the dominant learning approach within the case study can be characterised as technical/managerial.

Third, for both Gender Links and DFID, there were clear intentions to facilitate interpretive/practice-based knowing and doing. However, this sort of learning is not

formalised in everyday practice. Thus, for the GTF, accountability concerns took over. For Gender Links, it seemed instead that these strategies were simply overshadowed by the dominant accountability practices within the organisation. These institutional and relationship dynamics frame the discussion of ICT in the following chapters. Understanding these dynamics in context are central to interpreting the instrumental and fundamental contributions of ICT to learning and accountability.

Chapter 5

AN INSTRUMENTAL VIEW OF ICT IN LEARNING AND ACCOUNTABILITY

This chapter analyses the instrumental uses of ICT for learning and accountability. It begins by applying my theoretical framework to DFID's GTF, and then focuses on Gender Links, where most of my ethnographic and participatory research was conducted. It builds on Chapter 4 by comparing and contrasting how and why ICT contributes to the identified learning and accountability processes, focusing on core reporting technologies, and then learning technologies. These are substantiated by staff interviews and participant observation.

This chapter focuses on three main issues:

- Previous research argues that learning and accountability are mutually reinforcing (Cutt and Murray, 2000; Roper and Pettit, 2002; Ebrahim, 2005). My research suggests, though, that they have contradictory mutual effects, and it is important to take an integrated view of learning and accountability to reveal the role of ICT in this context.

- Second, the literature exposing power asymmetries within relationships between donors and CSOs presents donors as actors who control development aid resources, and CSOs as actors with limited influence to change relationship conditions (Wallace, 1999; Ebrahim, 2003b; Bebbington

and Riddell, 2013; Banks, Hulme and Edwards, 2015). My research confirms that ICTs largely reinforce these power asymmetries, but often in ways that are not straightforward.

- Third, this chapter takes a holistic approach to understand how and why technologies working in unison contribute to learning and accountability. A common approach within ICT research in this area is to focus on the adoption of ICT (Saeed, Rohde and Wulf, 2008; Pillay and Maharaj, 2014) or on one tool or functionality of ICT (Nugroho, 2008; Avila *et al.,* 2010; Van Der Windt, 2013), without engaging deeply with its impacts on wider individual, institutional, or relationship learning and accountability processes.

5.1 Macro-technologies in practice

A macro-level claim relating to new data-sharing technologies is that "sharing aid information more effectively will ultimately enable stakeholders to build up a richer picture – by allowing more information to be aggregated and by allowing innovation in the way this information is represented and queried" (Gray *et al.,* 2009, p.3). This claim views technology contributing to development learning, and accountability through responsible use of resources, but it has not been evaluated in practice. This section analyses the use of ICT for learning and accountability within the GTF. I begin by explaining how ICT was used by DFID practitioners at the time of my research. I then contrast internal uses of ICT by GTF practitioners to show how outward-facing technological resources contribute to the accountability context.

DFID has a centralised reporting system that the GTF contributes to periodically: *"all of this is logged onto [our] systems. Each project is rated, which goes onto the system that is aggregated up… Even though we have to report on the*

overall project we do produce reports on bits of programmes" (DFID Civil Servant). This Civil Servant also referenced shifts in DFID policy, *"we are directed by the ministers, and ministers have different views. New parties come in. There has also been development of development thinking. A lot of change going on."* DFID increased evidence-based results reporting in 2010 (Muir and Rowley, 2014), and the changing institutional policies meant that the practitioners had little control over accountability mechanisms reified by the centralised reporting system. Regardless of the GTF's initial intentions (Chapter 4), central reporting serves as a standardised explicit procedure.

Nevertheless, central reporting that is aggregated up is only one facet of technologies used to track progress. Margaret, a Communications Officer who has worked at DFID for some time, showed me the GTF documents she saves to the central system at her desk in Glasgow. She opened an antiquated document management system, enabling employees to store annual reports, case studies, feedback letters, contracts and other project documents in folders located on a central server. She explained that documents are usually vetted before filing. For the annual reports, KPMG, as the fund manager, might contract out technical expertise to review the CSO report, write a feedback letter, which is then reviewed by DFID staff and edited before it is sent back to the recipient and subsequently loaded onto the system. There is an enormous amount of back and forth communication, revision, and negotiation that is not captured by the central systems.

Margaret spoke about her role compiling GTF "best practice" case studies:

Some of them submit case studies. And the best of these are written up. I think it's usually somebody at KPMG that writes them up, and so far we've had 43 case studies from the [GTF]... This is only a small selection of the

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ones that will have actually been submitted. These would be the ones that would be considered to be best. So for example, there's a Gender Links one from Mauritius.

…It can be a bit slow this system, to move from one folder to another, and for things to open. From our point of view, this was not the best of case studies because Mauritius isn't a country… You know how DFID now focuses on 27 priority countries? And Mauritius not being one of them, I can't really think that we would consider this a case study that they would be likely to use for the external website or our Intranet, but it was about political participation of women in Mauritius. I think it came with a photograph again, now if we're going to use it in that sense, we would want a photograph with it. [She continues to search through the folders and says in a quiet voice] I guess we'll have a look for it.

Whilst looking, she waited upwards of 10 seconds for the call-back from the server to populate her file list before moving on. DFID also prefers to have quotations from programme beneficiaries. She eventually tires, but seems used to this, she calmly mutters under her breath "*we should have spotted it by now, I don't know where… Oh, there it is.*" About three minutes later, she found a case study about a Zimbabwean councillor. Since Zimbabwe is a priority country, they chose to use that case study instead.

Margaret called the case studies *learning materials* but it is clear from her description of procedures that institutional accountability properties – such as DFID's priority countries and the institution's knowledge management approach to gather "best" practice – influenced what was stored on their systems. Regardless, the

system did not keep up with their shifting needs. When asked what her main frustration was, she responded that:

> [it] is not finding a really good way of storing the material that is coming out of the projects. Because, we're often called upon to provide examples, and because we don't have a proper repository for them they tend to be here, there, and everywhere. Some of them are on memory sticks, we also have a multi-media library, we thought that that might be a way of keeping the case studies, but that doesn't seem to be… [trails off].

The multi-media library she refers to was originally acquired to store and search for photographs, but DFID management tried to use it to share case study files as well, so that all staff would have searchable access. The storage limits of this library, though, were clearly inadequate. Besides, the communications team in London frequently ask her for very specific information on a priority country or a specific topic, *"it's often a case of trying to find a needle in a haystack. Just finding something that fits the right story at the right time. The comms people are often looking for something quite specific."* The Civil Servant, GTF Director, likewise stated that much of his time was occupied by information requests to compile and reformulate information for practitioners across the institution. Margaret suggested that other primary drivers for *"learning materials"* are communications specialists focused on DFID's public relations.

DFID has implemented new systems since the time of my research, but Margaret's experience highlights the significant barrier that antiquated databases represent for practitioners. Furthermore, implementing new data-sharing techniques, meant to aggregate and query information more effectively are simply not on the near horizon due to the complicated nature of the information they collect. DFID's

systems were undergoing a review at the time I was there, and it seemed that DFID sought to balance ICT needs with operational needs of multiple funds in the long-term. As the Civil Servant stated, *"small things we can do ourselves, larger institutional ones undergo a long procurement process."* Therefore, anything ICT related that involved changing institutional practices would not be operationalised within the short-term time frame of the GTF. The notion that development learning can improve dramatically through aggregation techniques takes much institutional negotiation and investment.

GTF practitioners did have control to budget and implement technology at the fund level. However, the GTF was risk averse to experimenting with technology for three reasons: 1) DFID needed to reduce civil servant hours, which may have encouraged experimentation but did not leave much time to do so (Sub-Section 4.3.1); 2) Fund Managers were focused on technical/managerial programme management (Sub-Section 4.3.2); and 3) new ICT options had high human resource costs and unpredictable outcomes. Furthermore, the Civil Servant thought staff had mixed views about ICT, stating that a "*huge number of people are totally excited by it. Moving diagrams, visualisation, geo-coding, a lot of talk of everything. Some want to do geo-coding of everything. Others are very suspicious.*" Suspicions are attributed presumably to assumptions that added time costs are accompanied by uncertain impact and almost no institutional support (Section 4.1). Generally, GTF practitioners were not confident in their abilities to learn new ICT skills or to implement tools. They chose to focus funds on recipient programmes and tested learning methods, rather than on experimenting with ICT.

DFID also has outward facing technological resources such as the gov.uk website (https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-international-development), and the Development Tracker (https://devtracker.dfid.gov.uk/) website

that are positioned to support learning and accountability (Figure 5-1). Both of these were launched during the period of my research. However, the website redevelopment was only briefly mentioned during one interview with the DFID Civil Servant, whereas the Dev Tracker website was not mentioned at all. This highlights how responsibilities for these resources are separate from practitioners who might use them, or who know what CSOs would benefit from the most. They appear largely to be imposed from the top.

Resources available online for the GTF include records of reports, projects, and links to external CSO recipient websites, but as of March, 2017, GTF projects have not been added to the Dev Tracker system. However, Gender Links is a recipient of another funding programme, so annual reports and case studies are available under the document tab in reference to this programme only (DFID, 2015). Since impact information resides in documents, it is not possible to aggregate this information across funding programmes in the same way as financial information. Furthermore, the impact Gender Links has achieved through the GTF is not referenced at all. Although it appears that publishing these documents fulfils DFID's transparency guarantee, it is unclear who benefits from this.

Figure 5-1. Gender Links' partnership arrangement detailed on DFID's Dev Tracker website, accessed January, 2015
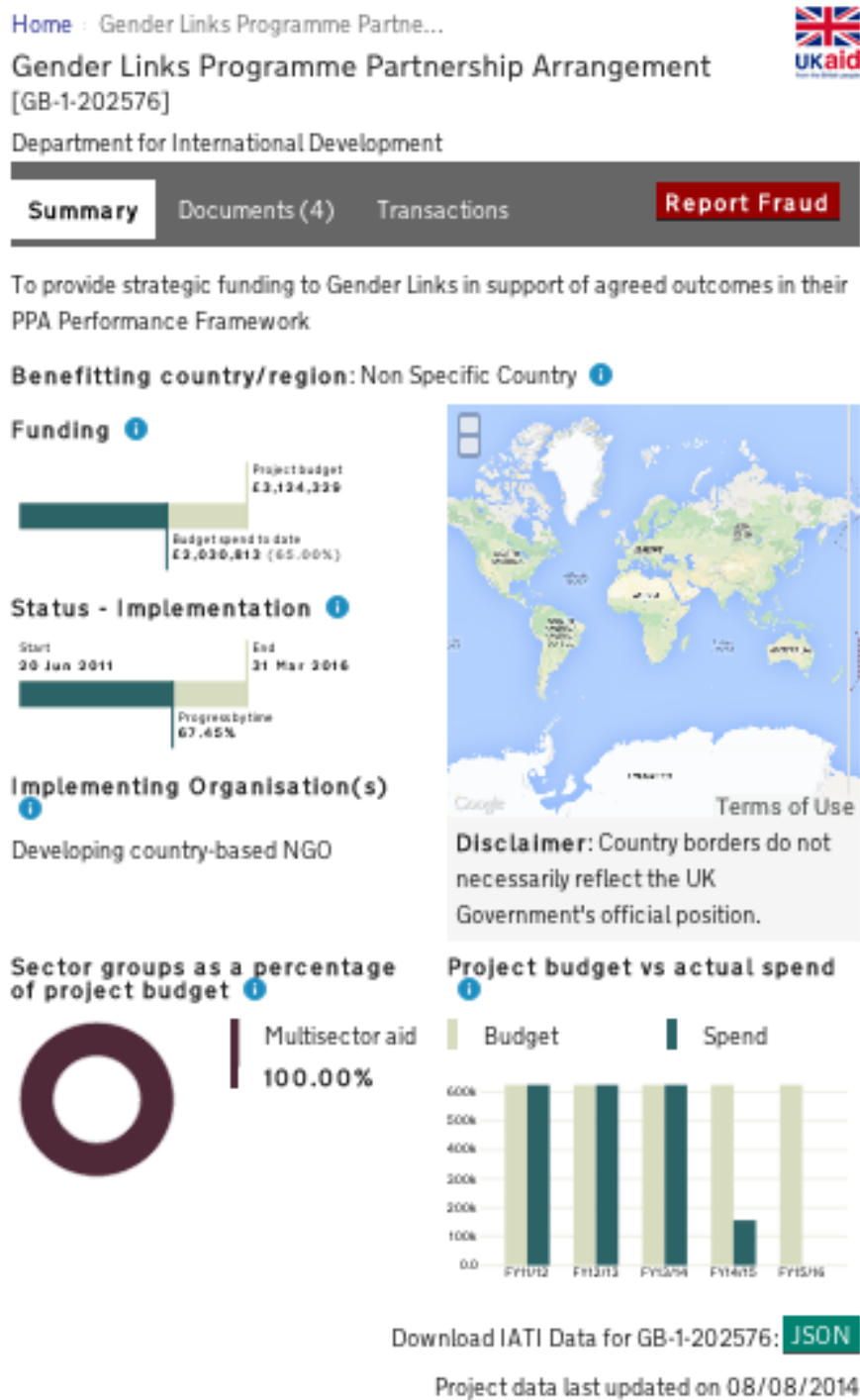
Source: DFID (2015).

My research highlights that many macro-level learning and accountability discourses have been too technologically-driven. A key macro-level technology, such as the International Aid Transparency Initiative (IATI) information sharing standard, was taken up primarily because of new technological affordances, as Gray *et al.* (2009) argued. This initiative has indeed made inroads to address donor transparency and aid allocation issues outlined by Easterly and Williamson (2012). However, the IATI standard has now formed the basis of DFID's outward-facing technological resources and does not address the main learning and accountability problems faced by the GTF practitioners within the Department and its beneficiaries. There is a need to move beyond this first milestone of merely providing information, by also incorporating critical assessments of how this information will transform accountability processes between donors and CSOs. Reversing the discourse, by basing technological requirements on the needs of stakeholders who use aid information regularly, would help.

My research showed very little evidence that DFID at the time used ICT to solve their greater learning and accountability challenges, such as the inadequacies of their central systems, the problems with the use of log frame reports to draw out practical lessons, and even to save reports in easily accessible ways. This confirms the arguments of King and McGrath (2013) and Ferguson *et al.* (2010) who suggest that ICTs reify objective knowledge management approaches within donor institutions. However, GTF practitioners had limited influence on ICT choices, and the central systems were rigid and difficult to use. This means that the technical/managerial systems of knowing and doing can be reinforced by institutional ICT choices regardless of whether there was intent to do so. It may well reflect senior management's inability to understand how ICTs can best be used to support the organisation. It seems that DFID has made changes to its ICT systems within the last

three years, which suggests that DFID is trying to develop different priorities for the use of ICT. The next sections deconstruct the use of ICT within Gender Links as a means of highlighting a range of learning and accountability ICT needs that donors should consider.

5.2 Core reporting practices at Gender Links

Gender Links' Results for Change Framework (Sub-Section 4.4.1) uses ICTs to collect, manage, analyse and share information. Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) is a major focus within organisational learning and accountability discourses, which often focus exclusively on reporting within an M&E framework (Biggs and Smith, 2003; Mebrahtu, Pratt and Lonnqvist, 2007). However, when considering the contributions of technology, there were additional uses of technology supporting Gender Links' internal reporting infrastructure. Since expanding to include additional satellite offices, new human resource strategies involving weekly planning tools, weekly reports of activities accomplished, detailed job descriptions, annual performance reviews for staff, and other learning activities were introduced (Gender Links, 2014). This chapter focuses especially on core reporting in the form of both M&E and human resource management. I begin by explaining the different technological components of the core reporting systems, and then explore how these technologies were enacted by different groups of staff, as well as examining the implications for the role of ICT within core reporting practices.

5.2.1   The reporting technologies

Technologies examined for reporting include synchronous communication tools (telephone, mobile phone and Skype), Microsoft Office (used to create documents and collaborate on; including Outlook for email) and online form software. I define *reporting templates* as reports administered by Gender Links or donors that standardise information collection through the use of electronic spreadsheets or documents. Online form software enables information collection in a central online database. I define *reporting forms* as instances where this software was used to collate information. A full list of templates and forms are given in Table 5-1. The properties of the reporting form tool were typical of Web-based survey software and included short and long text fields, number fields, multiple choice and selection formats, as well as drop-down lists (Andrews, Nonnecke and Preece, 2007).

Table 5-1 List of reporting tools implemented at Gender Links

	Number and type of reporting tool	**Type of information**
Reporting forms *One centrally served online survey tool*	Monthly forms: • Calendar *(4)* • Document audit *(7)* • Website audit *(7)* • Programme tracking sheet *(7)* • Event/workshop tracking sheet *(5)* • Events by month *(7)* • Participants by month and sex *(7)* • Photos per month *(7)* • Partnerships tracking sheet *(1)* • Research tracking sheet *(1)* • Media tracking sheet *(1)* • Aggregate reports *(7)* • Web and list-serve statistics *(3)* • Website commentary *(2)* • Testimonial log *(1)* • Publications feedback *(1)* • Attitudes and Protocol knowledge quiz *(1)* • Attitudes and knowledge tracking sheet *(1)* • Internet usage *(1)* • Staff group mailing list usage *(1)*	*Quantitative Aggregation* 94% (68 out of 72) *Qualitative feedback & evidence* 6% (4 out of 72)
Reporting templates *Word and Excel templates*	Weekly template: • Weekly plan *(1)* Monthly templates: • Women in politics/ Changing lives *(2)* • SADC Citizen scorecard *(1)* • Institutional case studies *(1)* • Barometer case studies *(1)* Annual templates: • Knowledge skills and attitude form for staff *(1)* • GL learning journey *(1)* • Organisational scorecard *(1)* • Team assessment *(1)* • Board profile *(1)* • Country registration *(1)* • Staff profile *(1)* • 360 staff evaluation *(1)* Every five years: • Beneficiary analysis *(1)*	*Qualitative collation* 27% (4 out of 15) *Qualitative feedback & evidence* 27% (4 out of 15) *Quantitative aggregation* 13% (2 out of 15) *Qualitative and mixed methods analysis* 33% (5 out of 15)

Source: Compiled from Rama (2012).

5.2.2 The influence of external reporting on internal reporting

Programme reporting templates are usually planned and defined (or negotiated in the case of the GTF) by the donor according to specific formats. Wallace (1999) demonstrated that CSOs are drastically affected by reporting requirements. She argued that this is primarily due to donors' preferences for results-based management approaches. In contrast, Lowe Morna said "*donors will only direct your agenda if you don't have one. Have your agenda, have a clear idea about what you want to do. […] It's like if you're driving a car, if you're in the driving seat, then you can keep control of the direction.*" However, specific formats, wordings and semantics of reporting templates induced major sources of frustration since the type of technology used to create external reporting templates influences internal reporting systems significantly.

Lowe Morna has wide-ranging experience and oversight regarding donor relations. She spoke about *"who's who in the zoo"* whilst referring to developing relationships with various types of donors as well as the ensuing external reporting requirements. Annual reports, inception reports, narrative reports, log frames, value for money reports, case studies and indicators, were types of requirements that varied substantially across donors. In her own words:

> *So the log frame for the EU is not quite the same as the [Netherlands']*
> *FLOW one, not quite the same as the [DFID's] PPA one and so on. So*
> *then you have a country that has all three of these donors maybe*
> *contributing in some part to some thing, and then it just becomes one huge*
> *big editing.*

…As I'm sitting here now, I'm supposed to do some concept note for [Sweden's] SIDA. In some cases, where it's even worse, they don't have a format. Then you go, and you say, this is our format, and then they come back and say, no, actually, why don't you do it this way. […] But they all have different formats or they have no formats. […] We've had to redo a log frame about 12 different times, at some point you're screaming. I don't have the time for this. It's really really not productive, it's semantics. Get on with the work.

She gave four more detailed examples of reporting template frustrations with other DAC donors. Whilst Lowe Morna does not cite these examples as donor interference as Wallace (1999) would, she admitted that she and her staff feel as though they waste time and effort repurposing information to suit donors' needs. This has an impact on institutional accountability properties because senior staff are indeed spending time focused on appeasing upwards accountability relationships. Thus, she is not "*driving [the] car*" completely, and must comply with donor requirements.

Senior managers at Gender Links are the essential contributors to external reports. This bolsters centralised information-collecting and decision-making in two ways: 1) Lowe Morna communicates with the donors in order to understand the donor requirements, and to determine how these requirements relate to their existing procedures; and 2) if external reports have new requirements, managers compare these with current operations to assess whether new information sources are needed. Whilst managers can draw on their understanding of programmes to reuse information for reporting, they also have to spend valuable time copying and pasting text from one document into another for reporting purposes.

In terms of technology, by choosing to use Microsoft Word to construct log frames, repurposing this information in other ways must be done manually. For instance, log frames are created using tables, not simple lists or paragraphs. If the ordering or semantics of rows or columns changes, log frames cannot be copied straight into a different reporting template. Each column must be copied and pasted separately, with considerable time needed to adjust and reformat – sometimes rewrite – text within each column. For example, I accompanied two programme managers to Swaziland for a training event. Whilst one manager presented, the other furiously formatted a log frame (Figure 5-2). The next day, she was cursing because the file had been corrupted and she had to create the reporting template from scratch and thus redo the previous day's work. When I enquired whether this happens often, she gave me a frustrated look, but did not reply. Her staff did not understand what the columns meant, and senior managers did not typically delegate these tasks.

Figure 5-2 Media training in Swaziland (second programme manager not pictured)

Source: Photo credit, Gender Links.

Effective ICT applications could ease recycling and formatting problems experienced by Gender Links, but Microsoft Word does not allow add-on applications, and would require donors and CSOs to adopt different tools. For instance, individual columns of text for common programme objectives or activities could be treated as variables that can be automatically populated into different templates. There are likewise many agile project management tools that organise information into multiple planning, implementation and feedback cycles. However, there were no tools on the market I could suggest that did not require substantial investment or customisation. Chapter 6 provides a detailed investigation of the reasons why Microsoft tools are therefore chosen instead of purchasing costly software, or building customised tools.

As I remarked in Chapter 3, I was optimistic that I could facilitate the design of technology to resolve basic formatting problems. My research confirmed that there is a role for ICT to streamline reports. As Lowe Morna puts it:

If anyone could invent a computer system that said, if it's the EU press this button, if it's DFID press this button, here's your plan, now customise it for these people, customise it for these ones. Gosh it would save NGOs so much time. Then maybe they would all begin with their plan, and then as this or this call for proposal comes up, they can draw from that one plan.

The original intentions of my research dovetailed with Lowe Morna's desires, but my inability to influence the organisation reflects the sustained importance of Ebrahim's (2003b) seminal work in this area, which focused instead on reducing power imbalances, influencing organisational practice norms, and advocating for longer-term funding relationships. This implies addressing organisational norms, funding conditions and ICT, simultaneously.

5.2.3 Constructing reporting forms: my experience creating the Summit applications

According to Anheier (2014, p.472) "the relative ease of communicating between headquarters and national offices or federation members has in many ways simplified basic operational tasks such as planning, monitoring, and evaluation, which previously consumed significant travel, phone, fax, and other costs." This section investigates this claim by contextualising the process of constructing reporting forms at Gender Links. It identifies the main actors, the temporal dimension of the construction process, as well as how these aspects combined to shape the design of the reporting form. Many examples later in this thesis embody a similar dynamic in the organisation's ICT design patterns (Chapter 6).

At a management meeting in January, 2013, the team was strategising to scale up the SADC Gender and Development Protocol Summit awards. Since 2010, Gender Links has hosted an annual Southern African Regional Summit in Johannesburg. 2013 was the first year that Gender Links planned to hold 13 Country Summits, and one Regional Summit for the winners of the Country Summits. As Figure 5-3 outlines, Country and Regional Summits were intended to increase knowledge sharing, learning, participation and the quality of work. Award recipients receive recognition and the opportunity to travel to Johannesburg for the Regional Summit. Additionally, Lowe Morna wanted to align their M&E with this major event. This led Gender Links to redraft the Summit award application forms to ask participants why their achievements were outstanding in terms of the SADC Protocol.

Figure 5-3 Rationale and objectives of the 2013 SADC Country and Regional Summits

Rationale: The Southern African Gender Protocol Alliance that campaigned for the adoption and ratification of the Protocol has turned its focus to implementation. Comprising fifteen country focal networks, eight theme groups, and two interest groups (men's organisations and Faith Based Organisations), the Alliance is gathering evidence of the SADC Protocol@Work. At consultative meetings in June and August 2012, media, local government and alliance partners agreed to work together to host several country and one regional summit that will show case good practice in making use of this instrument.

Objectives:
1. Create synergies in the work of the SADC gender protocol programme, media, local government and gender justice work.
2. Broadening participation and sharing of knowledge within each country.
3. Raise the COE profiles.
4. Strengthen ownership and partnerships among different stakeholders.
5. Increasing participation, visibility and impact.
6. Strengthening the GEM networks and citizen participation.
7. Improving the quality of work through increased competition and collaboration.

Source: Adapted from Gender Links (2013).

At the meeting, the CEO asked me to create online application forms to eliminate the need to transcribe application information from paper, thus saving on printing, postal and time costs. The new application forms asked participants to reflect on more than a dozen SADC Protocol themes. Because of the lengthy nature of the redrafted application forms, Lowe Morna wanted applicants to be able to save their work and return to it later. She hoped that participants would put more thought into the application if they could work on it periodically. Another requirement was for word restrictions, which she hoped would result in more concise answers. Managers were sceptical that online forms were user-friendly, because country staff argued that most beneficiaries were not familiar with filling out online forms. They wanted to maintain a Word application form, to offer a familiar, usable option. Since Gender Links was expecting hundreds of Summit applications, however, it was not clear how feasible offering both the online and Word versions would be. Lowe Morna pulled

together a small team to work on this issue and asked to meet the following day to finalise the discussion.

The next day, I shared previous experiences developing a similar application system for the Quebec Social Forum in 2009. At the Forum, we allowed Word forms to be submitted in an attempt to include marginalised people, but we did not have the staff to input these onto our systems. All the information had to be stored in the system to analyse it. I anticipated that this situation would similarly amount to another laborious task that would fall onto the heads of the country staff without recompense. Feeling conflicted, I knew that Word forms would be a more user-friendly option for participants. However, I did not want staff to be obliged to pick up the slack, because I witnessed that they were already stressed and over-worked, as outlined in sub-Section 4.4.3. There was no clear solution to this problem.

I showed a mock-up version of the new system, demonstrating that Lowe Morna's requirements were feasible. This system was different to Gender Link's existing reporting form software because it required users first to create an account and then to login. This created a new step, one that staff were strongly against because they believed beneficiaries would not know how to create an account or to log in. Lowe Morna's view was that the organisation needed to *"move into the 21st Century"* and that country staff would just have to support participants to learn how to use it.

Rama, Chief Operations Officer (COO) – responsible for overseeing Gender Links' technological infrastructure – was not in favour of the new tool. I realised at the meeting, that the CEO probably called on me to provide alternatives as a means to show her dissatisfaction with what she thought would be easy to achieve, and thus that the COO was not *climbing every mountain* to provide adequate technological

infrastructure. That night, the COO sent out an email with a link to an example she created on the existing reporting form platform, and that was the end of the discussion that I was privy to.

I agreed that using the existing platform was beneficial because staff were familiar with it. In practice, the older platform was less efficient. It was also clunky and time consuming to work with, as it was only possible to save entire forms rather than specific fields which could be reused. Since it also did not offer a translation facility, it meant that the 22 application forms we created in English, needed separate French and Portuguese translations. Thus, we created 66 forms in total – 132 forms counting the Word versions (see Figure 5-4 for an example). It took three days with help from the COO and Web developer to finish constructing them. Due to time constraints, the forms were not piloted beforehand, and a series of changes came tumbling in once key staff members had had a chance to consult them. The resultant corrections were made 132 times.

Figure 5-4 Example summit award application

A. CLIMATE CHANGE AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

SADC GENDER PROTOCOL SUMMIT AND AWARDS - ALLIANCE APPLICATION FORM

When you see an arrow at the end of a box it means there is a drop down menu, please click on the arrow to select the correct option.

Fields marked with a red asterisk (*) are compulsory.

THE SOUTHERN AFRICA GENDER PROTOCOL ALLIANCE IS ORGANISED INTO THEMATIC CLUSTERS, CROSS CUTTING INTEREST GROUPS OR COUNTRY NETWORKS. PLEASE CHOOSE THE APPROPRIATE OPTION AND CLICK ON 'NOT APPLICABLE' IN THE OTHER TWO CATEGORIES.

WHICH ALLIANCE THEMATIC CLUSTER ARE YOU AFFILIATED TO? *

WHICH ALLIANCE CROSS CUTTING INTEREST GROUP
ARE YOU AFFILIATED TO? *

WHICH ALLIANCE COUNTRY CLUSTER ARE YOU AFFILIATED TO? *

WEBSITE (IF APPLICABLE)

NAME OF GOOD PRACTICE *

- PLEASE ATTACH A PHOTOGRAPH OF THE PRESENTER *
- PLEASE ATTACH AT LEAST TWO PHOTOGRAPHS OF THE GOOD PRACTICE *

2. PRESENTATION OF GOOD PRACTICE (PLEASE SEE GUIDELINES ON THE WEBSITE.)

2.1 SYNOPSIS: BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE GOOD PRACTICE AND MOTIVATION AS TO WHY IT IS A GOOD PRACTICE? (150 words) *

2.2 HOW DOES THIS ACTIVITY CONTRIBUTE TO ACHIEVING THE 28 TARGETS OF THE SADC PROTOCOL ON GENDER AND DEVELOPMENT? PLEASE NAME THE RELEVANT TARGET. (200 words) *

Source: Screenshot taken by author on January 25, 2013.

This experience highlights a functionalist technological construction pattern. The pattern began by identifying a need to collect information in a specific way. Initially, the reflex is to consult with experts and managers to identify existing technological tools that can fulfil this need. The trade-offs between whether existing technologies were easy to access and use for beneficiaries, and the implementation costs and difficulties of implementing something new were then explored. However, time was also a factor because staff did not have time to support beneficiaries to gain new skills to use a different service. More time needs to be planned for beneficiaries to gain these skills.

It is unrealistic to assume that ICT simplifies and eases CSO operations, as Anheier (2014) suggests. The scale and scope of planning, monitoring and evaluation changes due to ICT affordances. Although ICT simplifies certain temporal aspects of communication, it can also complicate operational tasks particularly when examined through an accountability lens. Reporting forms enabled Gender Links to scale up the processing of applications, but there were trade-offs between internal and responsive accountability. Country staff were obliged to work longer hours to support beneficiaries, especially with writing. I observed that participants from Mozambique required a great deal of assistance. Country staff did not have adequate time to encourage more and diverse applications in Mozambique, because they were providing support with writing. Other countries, like Madagascar, had ten times the number of applications. The lack of a clear solution to these problems leads me to favour developing mechanisms to involve beneficiaries in decision-making structures of operational tasks that affect the form of participation through ICT. This notion is discussed further in Chapter 6.

5.2.4 "Instruction is coming… I've got this form now, how do I use it?"

The title of this section is based on something said by a country officer, explaining the crux of his learning process (Figure 4-9). His entire view of learning revolved around the use of reporting forms. This sub-section also focuses on the contributions of ICT to internal reporting processes. The core reporting technologies, such as weekly calendars and tracking sheets (see Table 5-1), are intended to support staff to develop skills and fulfil their roles effectively (Wilson, 2005). Country officers were responsible for inputting information into online forms, and this section explores the use of these forms from the perspectives of country and headquarters staff.

Junior country staff spend approximately half of their time inputting data. Most officers were unconcerned about this. Antso, male, stated *"because it is not us the communication operators. We are consumers."*[3] He meant that his role is to take instructions and to carry them out. In contrast, Theo, male, felt that he wanted more feedback. Specifically, he was interested in knowing how the information was subsequently used, and whether his country was similar to others in the region. When I asked him if he read the *Barometer*, or other Gender Links publications, he simply said that he did not have time. He sought immediate feedback connected to his everyday practice.

The five (out of 11) officers I interviewed or observed did not have problems using ICT or the forms, and were typically asked to handle most ICT tasks such as, photo and video-taking, website editing and reporting. They received ICT training for these tasks and considered the training adequate. The main issue identified by these officers related to workload, specifically pressure to complete their targets (see also

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[3] Parce que ce n'est pas nous des opérateurs là en communication. Nous sommes consommateurs.

Sub-Section 4.4.3). However, in Mozambique, I also noticed that using the reporting forms was often repetitive and boring. A stack of a few hundred attitude surveys laid on top of Samito's (the male Mozambique country officer) desk. He tackled a few, sighed, browsed car sales websites for 10-15 minutes then regained the motivation to continue inputting surveys. When beneficiaries came to the office unannounced, he helped them. If an errand came up, he attended to it. There were also significant power outages, preventing him from inputting information. By the length of my six-week visit, the pile on Samito's desk had not decreased significantly.

Pamela, a female country manager, tried to solve this problem by refraining from using paper-based forms altogether:

Especially that we do deal with rural areas and communities. People from different backgrounds, the learned, they are not. Also it becomes very hectic. For me, who is doing the M&E, if I go to a community and there are all these people who are not learned then I have to sit and start writing for them.

Pamela refers to the 'learned' as meaning that beneficiaries she works with frequently cannot read or write. She was responsible for filling in six to seven pages of questions for about 300-400 participants annually, thus requiring a significant amount of time and effort. As a result, she wanted headquarters to reduce the form down to a one-page questionnaire, but she was not overtly inclined to contribute specific suggestions about which questions would be most important based on her experience with participants. Her solution was to take her laptop to the rural communities *"if I want I can just line up everybody, go with my laptop and my 3G, coming one-by-one."* Whilst 3G mobile Internet in Zambia, where this manager is

from, is reliable, this was not the case in many other countries. Connectivity problems are discussed further in Chapter 6.

Once headquarters receives the forms, Tendai, a male M&E Officer in his late twenties, compiles aggregated reports. One difficulty was that forms were added to the system as programmes evolved without necessarily deleting or revising those previously used. Tendai showed me all the reporting forms:

> *So, this is where it is, to see the number you can see March 2012, and go back and produce a report. How many reports do we send, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, about 21 reports we see here.*

He did not use them all, but could not explain why. By neglecting to clean up old obsolete forms, users can easily become confused about which form to use. Tendai needed to be mindful when compiling reports to check out-dated forms for erroneously entered data.

He explained how he maintained consistent oversight over information that was coming in through forms and templates. Of the weekly plan specifically, he said:

> *it's not essentially cutting and pasting, you have to engage with what you are consolidating, otherwise, if you cut and paste, you will send out things that are out-dated, because people, not everyone has checked, or cheat. Say people will put in their plan things they have done… So I go back and I remove that, and communicate to the people. [Also,] I do not find each and everyone's plan in my inbox, so I have to do the follow-up.*

Staff make errors due to lack of attention, or they submit forms merely to fulfil their duty whilst hoping Tendai does not notice that the plans are out of date. The latter

was more likely to happen during busy periods when the plans were less of a priority. Managers also kept track of progress separately in spreadsheets in order to double-check the reports. In this case, managers informally track progress through email and telephone. This intended to control whether staff were forgetting to fill in the forms or inflating the activities they had accomplished in order to meet targets.

These checks and balances were often perceived as costly and tedious to staff in terms of time and effort required:

Correcting, going back and forth, takes time… It's human nature to submit on the last minute or last hour. Or to make excuses. There is no way I am going to submit this report [incomplete] even if day to day, I can only plead with them to submit on time (Tendai, M&E officer)*.*

Programme managers likewise stated that they were under pressure to ensure that accountability lines and deliverables were met. Given that these forms are regimented by the Results for Change framework, this gives little leeway to managers to use their judgement.

In sum, staff utilised reporting technologies to collect and send information to headquarters. The analysis of this information is carried out only by senior managers, and country officers wait for new instructions based on what has been decided by headquarters. My research concurs with Mebrahtu's (2002) analysis, because different groups of staff had different perceptions of the M&E systems, which impacted considerably on learning and accountability practices. Thus, Gender Links' reporting technologies do not support officers in immediately contributing their knowledge and experience to improve centralised processes, nor do they facilitate the officers to understand their beneficiaries, or development learning processes. Some of the analyses return to the country offices later through publications and

meetings, but many staff simply do not have time to read these given their heavy workloads.

My research demonstrates that reporting technologies reinforced the centralised conception of organisational management and decision-making beyond the M&E system. Mebrahtu, Pratt and Lonnqvist (2007, p.140) have argued that in order to quell prioritising upwards accountability relationships, learning and accountability practices should be separated to ease demands on front line staff: "potentially a simple M&E system with a clear accountability purpose can be developed and put into practice with limited training and support." My research shows that even simple reporting procedures require relatively substantial human resources to manage and control and that tedious ICTs can influence individual accountability properties, such as interest and motivation to carry out operational tasks. Also, the centralised managerial style did not ease demands on front line staff such that they had more power and time to focus on learning. The next section continues this discussion by exploring the technologies that were actually used to support learning within Gender Links.

5.3 Learning technologies in practice

The next three sections examine instrumental ICTs used by practitioners to support development learning, learning about organisational practice, and learning from beneficiaries – the three learning purposes that I investigate to clarify links between learning and accountability (Chapter 2). Gender Links does have other learning practices reliant on ICT, but these three were chosen because they were more technologically focused and highly integrated into practice. They are also activities that I was involved in for a high proportion of the participant observation periods.

5.3.1   Cyberdialogues

The first example explores learning from beneficiaries, through what Gender Links call *Cyberdialogues* – multi-user Web-based chat. Cyberdialogues have been a cornerstone of the 16 Days campaign – "making IT work for gender justice" (Gender Links, 2012, n.p.). Cyberdialogues enable practitioners to learn from beneficiaries and to contextualise development issues. However, chat rooms introduce a barrier that prevents practitioners from knowing who beneficiaries are, and thus it is difficult to make claims about accountability towards them. Nevertheless, Gender Links organises, with its partners, free and accessible sessions open to the communities within which it works, which is also an expression of responsive accountability.

Users connect to cyberdialogues, via the Internet, to Gender Links' server through a Flash-plugin within a browser by clicking a link. Chat rooms can be password protected, but the 16 Days cyberdialogues were not. Lowe Morna selected this technology to engage beneficiaries when Gender Links' Web development company showed her a demo. Cyberdialogues were offered over 11 days in four languages: English, French, Portuguese and Afrikaans. These were facilitated by regional partners who have Internet connections and computer labs.

On November 25th, 2012, I was asked to moderate the following day's French cyberdialogue. I was supposed to cover one day, but I ended up moderating for 11 days, as no other French moderator was available. Participants in French cyberdialogues were from DRC, Seychelles and Madagascar. However, only one cyberdialogue engaged participants from multiple countries simultaneously. There were no donor or state government participants, although this could have been an informative learning opportunity for them. I had no previous experience moderating chatrooms, and I was concerned I would not have sufficient knowledge of gender-

based violence issues in the region to lead the discussion. However, I was given a template to use. This contained the theme, and a series of questions. After each chat, I was instructed to fill in a report documenting the number of men and women in attendance (Table 5-2), three quotations from the discussion, a summary of discussions, and a list of five actionable recommendations to be taken within the next year. Participants enter handles to identify themselves, as far as I could tell, there were no repeat visitors other than the facilitators.

Table 5-2 Cyberdialogue themes and participants

Date	Theme	Number of men	Number of women	Unknown	Total
26/11/2012	How do we eliminate gender-based violence?	2	10	2	14
27/11/2012	Raising your voice will make you free	2	12	2	16
28/11/2012	Sexual harassment	3	7	0	10
29/11/2012	Role of the media	4	11	0	15
30/11/2012	HIV and Gender-based violence	5	11	0	16
2/12/2012	Culture, religion and gender-based violence	3	11	11	25
5/12/2012	Gender and Climate Change	12	13	0	26
6/12/2012	The role of men and boys in gender-based violence	2	3	0	5
	Totals across all days	**33**	**78**	**15**	**126**

Source: Author.

I anticipated technical problems, such as power outages or connectivity problems. Based on my experience facilitating web-conferencing capacity building activities for CSO workers across West Africa (Bentley, 2009), I thought that the questions might also be too technical, and that certain participants would dominate because some people might not be able to read or write quickly enough to keep up.

Most of my suspicions were unfounded, but it is not certain why. Located in an office in South Africa, with limited time, I did not have a chance to learn about the participants' backgrounds, their motivations for joining the cyberdialogue, or whether the questions were too basic or advanced. Most days, all of the participants were located in one computer lab, which is not ideal because then participants do not discuss with visitors from other countries. However, it made it easier for people having difficulty to express their opinions with the help of others. We suffered only one day of severe connection problems, due to the server in Johannesburg, which erased our chat history.

The level of discussion was lively and responsive to the questions. I gathered that participants were already familiar with the gender sector and its jargon. Later, I asked a Manager if she knew the profile of the cyberdialogue participants. She indicated that she was not sure, but she assumed that they were often NGO workers and participants who had been involved in Gender Links training for quite some time. This insight seemed to support my observation that the participants were both familiar with the jargon and were not intimidated by the technical questions.

These cyberdialogues enabled participants to contextualise regional gender-based violence issues by outlining their own experiences and offering solutions to common problems. Sharing between cultures enabled a frank, and often humorous, openness about cultures and traditions. For example, I learned what "papa gateaux" (literally cake father) means. When I asked if it is a man who bakes to lure women into bed, participants erupted with *"lol"* and *"hahahaha"*[4], eager to explain to the Canadian that it was an older man who pays for a woman's living costs but is not necessarily married to her. Explaining obvious aspects of one's culture in simple

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[4] "mdr" and "hihihihi".

terms can make it possible for even progressive gender advocates to see their culture in a different way. The cyberdialogue that engaged participants from two countries was by far the liveliest and most enriching discussion. I was told that the English chatrooms gained broader participation than did our French ones, but I was unable to attend these sessions to confirm this finding.

This was also one of the few activities that allowed me direct contact with beneficiaries, and I learned a great deal from them about their cultures, thoughts and approaches to addressing gender-based violence. I had read and edited dozens of Gender Links publications prior to this activity, but this experience helped me to create connections between the abstract, general statistics and the people who Gender Links was working with. I felt a stronger sense that Gender Links was responsive to participants as a result, and this indicates a positive relationship between learning from beneficiaries and responsive accountability.

However, I am mindful that I may have developed a false sense of responsiveness towards beneficiaries. Raftree and Bamberger (2014) listed selectivity bias, and tool-driven processes as two main challenges when integrating ICT into M&E. Cyberdialogues underline a selectivity bias because participants needed to have a certain literacy level, and access to a computer connected to the Internet. Furthermore, Lowe Morna launched this activity because she saw an opportunity to make use of a new technology. The Social Impact Lab (2016) suggests that participants should be consulted in order to select technology inclusively. This view suggests that it is not advisable to engage beneficiaries through the use of top-down ICT which requires participants first to learn to use unfamiliar tools before engaging. Whilst this view holds merit under certain circumstances, in this instance, I found this initiative to be quite useful. This suggests a need to be mindful of the context, but that it is also beneficial to select ICTs based

on learning needs and potential outcomes. Additionally, it is critically important to acknowledge the long-term commitment of Gender Links to support a sustained capacity building infrastructure around the use of cyberdialogues to engage beneficiaries.

5.3.2　Changing Lives

A qualitative M&E activity called at the time of research *Changing Lives* is both an example of development learning and of learning from beneficiaries*.* As stated on their website, "Gender Links gathers testimonial evidence of how its work is changing lives and analysing what changes are taking place, because it is through changing lives that we change institutions, countries, our region and eventually the world!" (Gender Links, 2017b n.p.). It is possible to browse Changing Lives on the Gender Links website (http://genderlinks.org.za/driversofchange/). A first point to note is that the interaction between organisational target-based procedures and posting the articles on the Web influenced this activity towards a technical/managerial system of knowing and doing. Second, the benefits of learning as an elicitation activity are undermined because of this interaction. During my research, I participated in all key components of this activity: 1) carrying out interviews and writing them up; 2) editing profiles and posting them on the website; and 3) reviewing the interview guide. I discuss these components in this order.

I interviewed three people in Swaziland whilst attending a journalism workshop prior to their elections in 2012. Interviews were arranged by the Swaziland country manager prior to the workshop. Gender Links cascades activities so that there is synergy between governance and media programmes, and their M&E systems collectively. However, rather than this intended synergy, it felt to me more like three people – busy with training and campaigning – were forced to be

interviewed due to my presence. Additionally, only one participant thoroughly reflected on the questions. The Swaziland country manager tried to select interviewees based on her knowledge of them personally as well as their long-term involvement in Gender Links programmes. However, she also needed to select people to meet quotas set by headquarters.

Prior to interviews, I was given a template, and a short training session. The first interview was conducted the day before the Gender Links training session, and it took place at the Swaziland Ministry of Education with a woman who worked for an initiative housed within the Ministry. I took handwritten notes and with permission digitally recorded each interview. The other two interviews took place at a hotel in Mbane, Swaziland. These interviews were conducted during breaks in training and were more rushed because of the schedule.

All of the interviewees spoke at length about themselves, their jobs, and their goals and how they have changed through interaction with Gender Links. It was, though, difficult for interviewees to identify the activities in which they had participated with Gender Links specifically. It was not clear if they had participated in few activities, or if they just could not remember details of the activities. The two men I interviewed offered vague descriptions about what they had done with Gender Links and spoke in general terms about how they had changed. One man said:

> *if my wife and I were to work in the fields for the day, at the end of the day I could sit alone by the tree. My wife, however, would be expected to go and cook for me. Now, I will cook. GL helped me change a lot, especially my attitudes towards women.*

However, this interviewee was a former politician, not a farmer, and when I asked him if he really cooks, he laughed. His main reason for thinking he had changed was

because he attended a Gender Links course, where he learned that a young woman could teach an older man like himself. This sort of attitudinal shift could be evidence of impact, but I did not know enough about the Swaziland context to understand the magnitude of this shift. Regardless, I saw it as my role to report the interview transparently, from his perspective. I was curious to dig deeper, as neither of the men were totally convincing, but there simply was not enough time.

Back at headquarters, I transcribed interviews, which took 2.5 hours each. I then consulted a set of standard editorial guidelines to write up each interview in the first person. Large portions of the interview were removed, based on the instructions within the editorial guidelines. Normally, it is the country officers and managers who write the articles. Staff received regular training and feedback on their writing, but most officers complained about the difficulty they had with writing. This meant that articles frequently required significant editing before they were suitable for posting online due to grammatical and sentence structure errors.

As Lowe Morna later instructed me via email (October 14, 2012):

Pls find attached all the pieces I received that are not yet edited. Please also find attached an example of one I edited, plus our editorial guidelines, with regard to the kinds of issues that need attention in these pieces. As these are written in the first person and we would like to retain "voice" these are largely small matters like use of full names and titles including when they refer to other people […]; incorrect grammar, ENGLISH spelling, making sentences shorter; periodically moving around content a bit to make the arguments coherent.

I was an ideal candidate to edit Changing Lives articles because my English writing skills are sufficient to the task, and I could also upload the articles directly onto the

website. There was no procedure to check with beneficiaries what was written about them before this information is posted online. Their articles are posted along with their name and photograph.

Some of the key staff involved in this initiative started to question the outcomes. It was not clear who was reading this information, or how it was going to be used. The website prompts users to tell Gender Links why they are accessing its content, but making sense of these responses is more trouble than it is worth. Many users enter nonsense just to make the dialog box go away. There were also content-related issues. One article (see Figure 5-6 for an excerpt) sparked a lengthy debate one day in the kitchen at headquarters. Victoria, programme manager, took issue with the kind of change that the participant had contributed. She did not want this profile to be posted on the website because she believed that it propagated negative stereotypes about women. Victoria thought that the article presented women as lazy only willing to work whilst watching TV. There is no information about the women themselves or how and why the sewing programme was suitable for them in the first place.

Figure 5-5 An excerpt from a Changing Lives profile

After noticing that less and less women were attending the sewing classes which were offered by the village council, Gunglee did some research to establish the underlying issues.

His study revealed that women preferred to stay at home and watch their favourite soap opera instead of going to sewing class. He put a motion to the village council that a television set be mounted in the training room. His motion had unanimous approval and a television set was installed so that women could do their practical work and watch their favourite television programmes at the same time.

Source: Copied from field notes (October 16, 2012), see Gender Links (2013) for published version.

To resolve this ambiguity, Victoria wanted to institute interview skills training so staff could ask the participants why they think the way they do. Another Officer thought that it would be better to do in-depth case studies to understand how Gender Links is changing beneficiaries' lives. He suggested that it was not enough to post the information online, and that Gender Links should also do qualitative analysis of the findings to understand patterns. He made the point that Gender Links' concept of change was different from those of the beneficiaries. Gender Links' approach to gender issues mirrors that of the SADC Protocol, and he believed that the Protocol is too abstract for beneficiaries. Their concept of change is more concrete, such as when a council gives a poor old woman a house. That is an example that would significantly change her life, but that does not systematically institute measures to change gender relations in the community. The three of us were in agreement on this point.

However, Victoria then immediately gave reasons why it would not be useful to do a qualitative analysis of the Changing Lives articles. She viewed this activity merely as *"a numbers game."* Requisite high targets to write new Changing Lives articles every month would confound the results. She said that the country office staff are under so much pressure that they send in anything *"in order to tick it off."* She then has to edit the articles in order to reach her targets. Her view was that there is simply no time to do analysis, or to do adequate quality control because there is too much pressure to produce. Thus, the results could not be trusted.

In mid-February, all headquarters staff, myself included, were traveling to the country offices to do *verification visits* (Sub-Section 5.3.3)*. Senior managers asked me to comment on the Changing Lives template prior to these visits. This was one of the only opportunities I had to use ICT for structural integration, as I made suggestions to the template, repurposing it into an interview guide rather than a

reporting template. By taking what I had learned through practice and discussion, I included a section on ethics, a basic script to read to participants stating how their information would be used, and a verbal consent section. Suggested modifications were reviewed at the meeting, where I briefly summarised the issues. Whilst I received no negative feedback, these changes were not ultimately accepted. No explanation was offered.

Reflexively, this was the most unsettling activity that I undertook. The first rationale of the initiative is to document the voices of Gender Links beneficiaries as first-hand accounts. A second rationale that emerged was that of learning about the impact of Gender Links initiatives. However, by posting the Changing Lives articles publicly on the website, a host of conflicts emerged. First, the articles were significantly edited such that the authentic voices of the participants were modified to use UK English. Although participants were given the opportunity to speak to us in their own words, these words needed to be changed to fit within a different linguistic standard. Second, when results emerged that were inconsistent with the organisation's mission, these voices were silenced by excluding them from the website. The profiles that I wrote were poor examples of Changing Lives. None of these were published on the website. Third, participants had no say in how their information, including profile photographs, were used on the website. Fourth, it was clear to me that staff were driven by targets to produce for the Web rather than seeking to learn from the voices of their constituents.

This was the only activity in which I was involved where practitioners questioned the privileging of organisational knowledge interests over the knowledge and realities of marginalised people (Powell, 2006). Our kitchen debate recurred frequently, but the website – through its proclivity for written text and portraying positive evidence of effect – structured the M&E activity in a way that was

challenging to navigate and did not support an interpretive/practice-based knowledge construction process. Using other technological mediums, such as video or audio, could resolve some of the editing issues, and Gender Links had hired a media assistant to explore video production for these purposes. However, Chapter 6 shows that, due to bandwidth and access patterns of beneficiaries, Gender Links felt distributing this information through the website was still a more accessible and time-efficient option.

5.3.3   Verification visits in Mozambique

The fourth example is a mixture of all three purposes of learning as it was a major evaluation component of Gender Links' largest programmes. This section explains how ICTs were used within the verification visits. In February 2013 verification visits took place in ten countries to evaluate progress of the media and governance Centres of Excellence (CoE). The purpose of the visits was to collect evidence of gender mainstreaming progress within the CoEs, to carry out a roundtable evaluation, to speak to community members to confirm evidence, and to take photographs and videos of the visits. This evidence was key to generating insight into Gender Links' theory of change for their GTF programme. Verification visits were a unique opportunity to explore interactions between ICT and the three systems of knowing and doing in Section 2.5 because I learned about practice whilst in the field, and later shared this knowledge with headquarters through ICT.

Ramalingam (2013) argued that when CSOs base their tools and methods on theories of change that do not factor in the complex, situated, messy nature of change, they compromise the impact they intend to have. He suggested CSOs could use a range of integrative "participatory and adaptive learning and planning approaches such as outcome mapping, constituency feedback, most significant

change, positive deviance techniques, appreciative inquiry, and many others" (Ramalingam, p.351). The verification visits involved participatory scoring of gender mainstreaming progress, however, our role seemed more focused on evidence gathering than on participatory learning. Lowe Morna told us at a headquarters meeting that we needed to know "how alive are these action plans? Where are the statistics? Where are the documents?" (Meeting notes, January 30, 2013). Nevertheless, collecting evidence using ICT could potentially enable learning about practice *post hoc*.

There was also some information that emerged at the specific time and place whilst I was in Mozambique, which is consistent with McFarlane's (2006) view of knowledge as spatially and materially relational. Ramalingam's (2013) perspective takes a more rational approach to knowledge, which does not account for how difficult it is for knowledge to circulate between country offices and headquarters. Experience with the context and strong relationships with local actors may help for such knowledge to circulate through ICT, but there is also knowledge that emerges through practice (McFarlane, 2006). For example, I previously lived in Maputo, Mozambique's capital city, in 2005-2006, which made it easier for me to have an idea about the Gender Links programme before arriving. I knew that there were not as many CoEs in Mozambique as in other countries, and progress was slow in comparison. The verification visits had not been scheduled as instructed by headquarters, but it was not entirely clear why.

Upon arriving in 2013, Maputo's infrastructure was the same as I remembered it then, bustling with traffic, a beautiful tropical landscape, juxtaposed by crumbling buildings affected by war and colonial abandon. Price inflation was extremely high, and staff within my favourite coffee shops complained about their stagnant wages. Yet, life went on, and girls that I used to play volleyball with were now mothers,

graduates, and employees of international organisations. The Lusophone Gender Links office was a completely different organisational environment than headquarters. It moved at a slower pace, which was somehow familiar to me. Through practice, I learnt some crucial facts, which would have been difficult to grasp at a distance, such as:

- Traveling to the northern provinces was not cost-effective, which focused the programme on provinces reachable by car from Maputo. Sibia, female country officer, needed all the councils to confirm availability before scheduling the visits because the routes were long and dangerous at night. Mozambique also suffered severe flooding in the Gaza provinces in early 2013 (reliefweb, 2013), and CoEs were over-extended (see Figure 5-7).

- The Lusophone Director was in the process of stepping down; he did not know the visit procedure through his own neglect. Likewise, he failed to communicate the limited progress of the media programme to headquarters. Visits for the media CoEs were not executed because there was no progress to report.

- Mozambique has two major political parties: Frelimo (majority rule) and Renamo (opposition party) (Carbone, 2003). The Director had previously run as a Renamo candidate, and I witnessed that this was perceived negatively by councillors within the Gaza province CoEs, a Frelimo stronghold. The Portuguese editor likewise gave this as a reason for hindrances within the media programme. My physical presence at the verifications visits helped to relieve some doubts local councillors had about Gender Links' motivations because I am not Mozambican.

Figure 5-6 Flooding in Mozambique's Gaza province

Source: Author.

Despite the benefits of being there in person to carry out the verification visits, we also had limited time to learn adequately about the councils' progress. Table 5-3 provides details of the CoEs participating in the visits. Visits unfolded in relatively the same manner across councils. They began with a round-table discussion to fill in a scorecard. The discussion centred on comparing gender mainstreaming progress to the council's baseline score. When scores were higher, we asked participants to provide concrete examples and documents, or to demonstrate within the community so that we could take photographs and speak to constituents about it. Whilst the use of the scorecard documented performance of the councils, it did not enable us to understand what could be improved, or why progress had occurred. If no progress was made, when we asked why, answers were frequently vague. Figure 5-8 shows how there is little space to write in detail about progress within the scorecard, as

Smillie (1995) has argued about log frames. Although, I had reviewed each councils'

action plan prior to each visit, the generic language used in those documents also

made it difficult to understand specifics.

Table 5-3. List of CoEs in Mozambique

CoE	URL
Xai-Xai	http://genderlinks.org.za/home-page-blocks/gender-and-governance/xai-xai-coe-2012-05-23/
Macia	http://genderlinks.org.za/home-page-blocks/gender-and-governance/macia-coe-2012-05-18/
Namaacha	http://genderlinks.org.za/barometer-newsletter/governance/namaacha-coe-2012-05-18/
Manhica	http://genderlinks.org.za/home-page-blocks/gender-and-governance/manhica-coe-2012-05-18/
Mandlakazi	http://genderlinks.org.za/home-page-blocks/gender-and-governance/mandlakazi-coe-2012-05-18/
Chibuto	http://genderlinks.org.za/programme-web-menu/gl-services/gender-and-local-government/chibuto-coe-2012-05-18/
Chokwe	http://genderlinks.org.za/home-page-blocks/gender-and-governance/chokwe-coe-2012-05-18/ (visit not complete due to floods)

Source: Author.

Figure 5-7 An example of the gender mainstreaming scorecard

Source: Gender Links (2013, p.1).

Simultaneously, the verification visits contained an overarching accountability objective that superseded learning about progress. The scorecards served as a tool to communicate local council progress to state governments. Gender Links expects the councils to mainstream gender according to the SADC Protocol (Section 4.2). The primary participants of the governance programme were mayors or selected council members. However, these participants do not have power to negotiate the programme structure, as it was their country's central government that signed and ratified the Protocol. Political agendas also had an important impact on the dedication of the participants. Sibia stated:

There are things that you know and I know, they can do it, but they're just not willing to do, but if they have that this is a direct order from the political party, they do it, and they do it very beautifully.

This statement runs in contrast to downwards accountability discourses because Sibia cannot improve the relationship by being more responsive to the participants, or by including them in programmatic decision-making. Instead, the scorecards used in the visits served as evidence to present to national governments who were responsible for making decisions on these matters.

The emphasis on using this tool to influence governments skewed attention away from contextual aspects important to understand gender mainstreaming progress whilst we were in the field. First, two of the districts, Mandlakazi and Xai-Xai, had women mayors and demonstrated significant mainstreaming progress unlike other districts. Perhaps it was because they were women mayors that their districts prioritised gender mainstreaming. However, in Mandlakazi, I did not see many men at all. This is probably because the Gaza and Maputo provinces are significantly affected by HIV infection due to labour migration patterns of predominately male

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populations (IOM, n.d.). Other districts led by men had mixed results. Two did not show progress for what seemed like a lack of interest, or respect for the women councillor participants. Overall, my impression was that gender relations influenced the mainstreaming process, but it was not clear how or why. Despite many attempts to gain answers to these crucial questions, I was always met with vague responses.

Second, councils affected by floods were preoccupied with delivering aid to migrant families living in refugee camps. Our experience could have provided insight into how the mainstreaming process has or has not enabled the councils to treat gender issues sufficiently in times of crises. For instance, the Macia council had distributed plots of land to families, but young families composed only of women and children were hesitant to use these because they had greater community support when sharing land in a densely concentrated area (see Figure 5-9). We took photographs and recorded stories to include as anecdotes within institutional case studies. Writing up the case studies enabled me to reflect on my ethnographic experience whilst visiting the people and places I encountered, and to share these details in pictures and text (see Appendix 9 for an example). However, it is not clear if our experiences informed subsequent programme strategies. Furthermore, only the positive institutional case studies were published on the website.

Figure 5-8 Women organise a small market within the refugee camp in Macia

Source: Photo credit, Gender Links.

My observations corroborate the argument that technical/managerial learning strategies are often inadequate to adapt to contextual factors at play (Easterly, 2006; Ramalingam, 2013). Although the accountability context was positively reinforced by providing documentation to decision-makers, an integrative participatory learning approach would have enabled greater contextual sensitivity. However, I am sceptical that senior managers could have gathered all the necessary information needed to respond quickly to this situation. By drawing on Ebrahim and Rangan (2010), Ramalingam (2013) suggested that managers could use a contingency model to inform the type of responses that may be appropriate. However, there was too little time, and the political, situated nature of knowledge came into play. Without the

power to influence the way practice is done at the local level, as Balboa (2014) has argued, the use of this knowledge to influence structural integration is not likely to happen (Chapter 2.3). ICT therefore seemed to entrench boundaries between technical and political capacities because country staff and beneficiaries have little say regarding the data collection tools and how collected evidence is utilised.

Nevertheless, publishing evidence on the website strengthens explanatory accountability potential for Gender Links and the CoEs. This resource could also enable citizens to build responsive relationships with councils. Likewise, organisational discourses surrounding the visits promoted using ICT to transparently report progress (Avila *et al.*, 2010; Kuriyan *et al.*, 2011). Taking photographs and videos, and writing the institutional case studies also enabled rich, contextualised knowledge to be shared with headquarters. However, Gender Links tended to portray limited, de-politicised results and did not sponsor beneficiaries (CoEs and citizens) to use the website for garnering responsive accountability. These tendencies lead me to conclude that these ICT practices primarily enhanced the interests of Gender Links.

5.4   Conclusion: the dysfunctional symphony of ICTs for learning and accountability

An orchestra is composed of instruments and musicians that play different parts to create one piece of music. Musicians can play music – coordinated, practised and in sync – that may sound dysfunctional if the symphony is not considered as a whole. This is an appropriate metaphor for the instrumental uses of ICT in this context. Many problematic issues were apparent, catalysed by individual, organisational and relationship ICT practices. Staff and their ICT instruments work together in concert to develop a symphony of voices, and specific kinds of evidence and knowledge. This

symphony has enhanced Gender Links' capacity to organise and communicate its mission, particularly in ways that have satisfied senior management, donor and high-level stakeholder preferences. ICTs have therefore served the interests of the most powerful actors to build up technical/managerial systems of evidence gathering that ultimately reinforce the status quo. These findings run counter to optimistic discourses on ICT for learning and accountability because ICTs did not in reality act as transformative agents within the case study. Positive views of the roles ICTs play in development organisations (*i.e.* Guzmán, 2007; Maron and Maron, 2007; Nugroho, 2008) tend to focus on specific ICTs and associated outcomes. This chapter contradicts the positive view of ICT by highlighting the full range of ICT practices and perspectives across the development aid relationship.

Orlikowski's (2000) three types of technological enactment – 1) inertia; 2) application; and 3) change – provide a framework for considering how ICT contributes to organisational practice by comparing conditions and consequences of ICT use in context. Table 5-4 compares the conditions and consequences of ICT use in this case study. At the macro level, the DFID practitioners' use of ICT fell into the *inertia* category because they used (or did not use) ICT to maintain their existing way of doing things. The remainder of the case study demonstrated that ICT was characterised by the *application* form of enactment. New ICTs were introduced into Gender Links' organisational practice as a means to augment their existing approaches and processes. There were no examples of *change* within the case study, because technology was not used substantially to alter practice or relationships.

Holistically, tracing the impact of reporting technologies in practice from the donor to the executive and practice levels of the CSO shows how ICTs reinforce the status quo, and that the powerful actors in the case study applied ICT to reflect the

needs of upwards accountability relationships. This, along with their technical development approach, is the main reason why Lowe Morna viewed developing their core reporting systems as the easiest way to maintain control over Gender Links' mission in ways that enhance the satisfying of external requirements. This application of ICT was essential for the growth and survival of Gender Links. These findings negate the view that ICTs can disrupt the status quo independently of the development aid relationship context. Instead, my research points to an urgent need for donors and CSOs to work together to reassess their individual and common reporting infrastructures if they truly wish to use ICTs to empower those with whom they are working.

Table 5-4 Enactment of technology within the case study

Technology-in-practice	ICT agency of actors	Influence of ICT on accountability context	Influence of ICT on link between learning and accountability	Type of enactment
Macro-learning • Reports • Central document management system • External websites	– GTF practitioners have limited control, risk averse and moderate technical skill	– Reinforces status quo	– Reinforces technical/managerial system of knowing and doing – Increased synthesis of development learning across contexts – Decreased importance of responsiveness to CSOs	Inertia
Core reporting technologies • Reporting forms and templates	– Senior managers are decision-makers, opportunistic and competent technical skill – Staff have variable interest, limited control, and adequate technical skill	– Significantly structures individual and institutional accountability properties (increases workload, institutes controls, limits roles) – Increased efficiency and capacity to fulfil controllability dimension of accountability	– Reinforces technical/managerial system of knowing and doing – Enhances development learning approach – Decreased delegation of responsibility – Increased responsiveness towards high-level mission – Decreased responsiveness towards individuals	Application
Learning from beneficiaries • Cyberdialogues • Summit applications • Verification visits • Changing Lives	– Same as core reporting – Beneficiaries often have limited technical skill, and limited access to ICT resources	– Positive and negative outcomes on individual accountability properties (workload pressure, loyalty, motivation) – Positive and negative outcomes on institutional accountability properties – Positive and negative outcomes on responsiveness towards beneficiaries	– Contextualises links between organisational mission and beneficiary perspectives – Sometimes supports acquisition of technical skills for beneficiaries – Likely induces selectivity bias – Negative consequences on privacy and emancipation within Changing Lives activity	Application
Learning about organisational practice • Changing Lives • Verification visits	– Same as core reporting	– Publishing positive results on website enhances Gender Links' image, and confounds explanatory accountability – Reinforced controllability dimension at the expense of responsiveness to contextual conditions	– ICT reinforced technical/managerial aspects of learning process – Variable, unclear links between learning and organisational change – Learning outcomes frequently displaced by accountability demands	Application
Development learning • Cyberdialogues • Changing Lives • Verification visits	– Same as core reporting	– Reinforced a bias towards positive evidence of effect	– Same as above	Application

Source: Author.

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Additionally, this case study has revealed mixed evidence concerning the intersection of learning, accountability and ICT. It has identified instances where ICT was used to learn from beneficiaries, to learn about organisational practice, and to support development learning. However, the links between learning and accountability were tenuous, and the use of ICT was often a significant reason for this. These results need to be interpreted with caution, though, because the relationship between accountability and learning was not always stable. For example, some Changing Lives articles are authentic, and do support a view that Gender Links learns both about its practice and from their beneficiaries, thus reinforcing accountability towards them. However, there are also times when the writing of Changing Lives articles is a surface activity responding to internal accountability requirements. These criticisms notwithstanding, two main conclusions emerge: 1) ICT has supported significant change in the forms of learning from beneficiaries, albeit in both positive and negative ways; and 2) these forms do not frequently enable beneficiaries to share their thoughts and ideas in culturally relevant ways.

It is apparent from this study that most learning technologies have supported learning as an elicitation activity rather than as a component of practice. There were no examples of structural integration. For ICT to support positive links between learning and accountability, there is a need to acknowledge the time and investment required to develop two avenues of possibilities. The first avenue is to commit to investing in more appropriate forms of ICT communication and information-sharing, such as researching and developing voice-based technologies. The second avenue is to mandate ICT and literacy capacity-building within all CSO programmes, as emblematic of the Gender Links approach. Currently, Gender Links only receives funding for these important activities when they can justify them in terms of targeted development results.

Chapter 6

ICT CONTEXTS AND SITUATED PRACTICE: THE FUNDAMENTAL CONTRIBUTIONS OF ICT TO LEARNING AND ACCOUNTABILITY

Academic studies focused on increasing downwards accountability usually advocate responsiveness, transparency and including marginalised populations in decision-making processes (Ebrahim, 2003a; Kilby, 2006; Jacobs and Wilford, 2010). However, greater complexity emerges when factoring ICT into such discussions. ICTs have the potential to change the context of beneficiary engagement by enabling radically different governance possibilities (Gray *et al.*, 2009; Gigler *et al.*, 2014). ICTs may also introduce additional sources of exclusion and inequality (Caribou Digital, 2016; World Bank, 2016). This chapter focuses on the underlying contributions of ICTs to downwards accountability at Gender Links by exploring the production of power by different actors by and through situated ICT practice.

Central to my analytical framework is that power is produced in different forms which vary across contexts and actors, and that poor and marginalised groups may be consistently disadvantaged (Gaventa, 2002; Cornwall, 2005). Actors can be empowered in one context, and disempowered in another depending on interactions between actors and institutional structures. This chapter applies these notions to explore how organisational ICT environments shape learning and accountability. I

unpack how staff, organisational ICT and beneficiaries are entangled in everyday practice. I suggest that researching ICT environments contributes a perspective that contests the usual arguments that ICTs contribute positively to learning and accountability as empowering to poor and marginalised people. This focus ameliorates the academic tendency to focus either on ICT access and empowerment for poor and marginalised people (Servon, 2002; Sadowsky, 2012), or on instrumental uses of ICT by donors and CSOs (Surman and Reilly, 2003; Nugroho, 2008; Saeed, Rohde and Wulf, 2008).

This chapter has two primary aims:

- First, the ICT practices of Gender Links staff are examined to analyse the context and purpose of beneficiary engagement through ICT. It draws on Ebrahim's (2003a) notion of participation as a key accountability process mechanism, and deepens our understanding of responsive accountability through ICT. It also disentangles interaction patterns according to individual and organisational empowerment capacities outlined in Sections 2.3 and 2.4. A more robust concept of what participation means within ICT environments is proposed.

- Second, it explores the fundamental ways in which Gender Links' ICT infrastructures shape learning and accountability for staff and beneficiaries. ICTs play essential roles in learning about organisational practice, but, also in further distancing them from beneficiaries. A major claim within the ICT4D literature is that inclusive technologies are increasingly available and easily combined to reach excluded populations (Social Impact Lab, 2016). My research contributes counter-evidence to this claim, as organisational ICT choices are contextually contingent, and primarily focused on internal needs.

The chapter is organised into three main parts. The first outlines the ICT conditions and interaction patterns observed in the case study, giving contextual information and outlining constraints. I then focus on organisational ICT infrastructures, first on Gender Links' website, and second on the organisation's enterprise system.

6.1 The context of beneficiary engagement through ICT

The next three sub-sections outline the primary ICT constraints that impinge on the potential to use ICT effectively for learning and accountability at Gender Links. The first focuses on Internet inequality, and the second explores how practitioners adapt to heterogeneous ICT access patterns to accommodate beneficiaries. The third sub-section synthesises these constraints to define what is meant by an ICT participation context in the remainder of the chapter.

6.1.1 Prohibitive Internet and communications costs

"Caitlin you don't understand, Internet is not cheap [in South Africa]" (Rama, COO).

Internet is a key resource that enables CSOs to connect local empowerment processes to relevant global policy agendas (Korten, 1990; Balboa, 2014). Internet access is not ubiquitous in Southern Africa and cost plays an important part in predicting ICT appropriation by CSOs and local populations. Gender Links pays substantially to meet their Internet needs for all satellite offices (Table 6-1). These costs disadvantaged Gender Links in comparison to other International organisations based in countries with lower communications costs. However, it remains a challenge to pinpoint the extent of the disadvantage and its subsequent impact on learning and accountability. Monetary cost alone is not an adequate determinant of disadvantage.

Table 6-1 Monthly communications expenditures 2011-2013

	Average	2011	2012	2013
HQ	£ 1,363.55	£ 1,386.59	£ 1,727.94	£ 976.11
Botswana	£ 240.78	£ 197.01	£ 285.83	£ 239.50
Lesotho	£ 27.81	£ 57.00	£ 22.78	£ 3.65
Madagascar	£ 212.09	£ 69.13	£ 232.11	£ 335.04
Mauritius	£ 33.45	£ 33.98	£ 25.08	£ 41.29
Mozambique	£ 113.74	£ 73.05	£ 70.35	£ 197.80
Namibia	£ 34.08	£ 69.27	£ 25.38	£ 7.60
Swaziland	£ 42.21	£ 34.73	£ 30.06	£ 61.85
Zambia	£ 51.54	£ 11.35	£ 23.86	£ 119.41
Zimbabwe	£ 107.08	£ 105.75	£ 167.23	£ 48.27
Total	**£ 2,226.33**	**£ 2,037.86**	**£ 2,610.62**	**£ 2,030.51**

Source: Padare (2014).

First, there are no international Internet cost benchmarks available for CSOs. A recent BOND (2016) report detailing self-reported data from CSOs primarily based in the UK, reported that CSOs of similar size to Gender Links spent on average 13.41% of their annual budget on central support costs. Of this, two categories (IT and communications and media) were approximately 4.2% of overall costs across all CSOs, or roughly 30% of total support costs. However, it is not clear whether these figures include hardware, software, or consulting fees in addition to Internet and communications costs. Gender Links spent 8% of their 2013 budget on operations costs, of which more than 50% was spent just on Internet and communications costs.[5] This crude comparison is indicative of disadvantage due to the organisation's access to affordable Internet, but examining monetary costs alone do not portray the extent of this disadvantage. Although prices have fallen since then, the general point that there are substantial variations in costs of access in different parts of the world remains valid.

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[5] I calculated this figure by taking 8% of their total revenue from Gender Links (2014), and dividing by their total expenditure in 2013 (Table 6-1).

Table 6-1 was drawn from a Gender Links spreadsheet detailing Internet and telephone expenditures between 2011 and 2013. Costs dropped at headquarters substantially in 2013, due to a concerted management effort to limit them by monitoring staff Internet use. At a meeting with the Internet provider in October 2012, senior managers reviewed data collected detailing Internet use by staff. This monitoring was implemented to plan effective use of the 5 Gb Internet bandwidth monthly transfer limit. However, restricting Internet use affected both individual and institutional accountability properties, since staff were limited to low-bandwidth Internet resources. The management team favoured the monitoring measure because they were concerned that staff were using high-bandwidth demanding websites, such as YouTube, for purposes unrelated to work. The management team was simultaneously carrying out a time-use study, but final results were not available by the end of my research. Whilst it may be beneficial to introduce measures to support productive work practices, the cost of bandwidth alone overthrew a critical assessment of their actual learning and accountability needs, drawing significant managerial attention away from their organisational activities.

Second, in Maputo, an electrical transistor exploded and massive power outages ensued for two weeks whilst waiting for repairs. Frequent interruptions were likewise named by staff from six other countries during Interviews, as Joyful, programme manager, stated:

> I'll give Zimbabwe as an example. They have power cuts so you can send emails and for 3 or 4 days you're not getting a response and then you hear that there was no electricity so there was no way that they could email. Then in that case, you have to phone. But you can't charge your phone, that's the other thing.

Power interruptions did not occur in South Africa to the same extent. Considering a significant portion of the country officers' work is online, these interruptions pose a significant disruption that headquarters does not experience.

Whilst Internet access and diffusion is an extensively covered area of research in ICT4D (Abernethy and Reichgelt, 2003; Wahid, 2007; Ewusi-Mensah, 2012) the impacts of inequalities in Internet infrastructures on CSOs have not been widely addressed. In line with the managerial style outlined in Section 4.4, prohibitive Internet costs convinced managers to monitor and control staff Internet use. Nevertheless, staff Internet surveillance potentially establishes perceptible boundaries within which staff and beneficiaries are expected to operate. These boundaries reinforce the controllability dimension of accountability within the organisation.

6.1.2 Heterogeneous ICT interaction patterns

ICT was critical for building and maintaining relationships with beneficiaries, yet there was not a standard set of practices within and between countries. Heterogeneous interaction patterns complicated downwards accountability processes because there were numerous, fluid ICT contexts and activities that occurred within them. Furthermore, ICTs can be both vehicles to organise activities, and the context within which development activities occurred. This sub-section focuses first on disentangling the heterogeneous patterns observed.

During interviews, it was common for staff to list several different strategies through which they reached beneficiaries through the use of ICT. Staff spoke of needing more than one type of ICT to communicate with them:

People don't have [email], they are still using Windows 97, things like that. It's a very hard thing for them when I say to them do it online, the document

never opens. So it depends on the context that we're working (Sibia, country officer)*.*

Except for the people without keyboards, they don't have the possibility to see many things. We are obliged to call them (Antso, country officer)*.*

Generalisations could not be made about each beneficiary group, such as citizens, civil servants, or media practitioners. During verification visits, I observed wide variation within the local councils. While some had Internet and computers, others did not. Most councils had at least a fax machine, but one did not. For this council, Sibia needed to send documents to the local post office via fax, and call the council to retrieve it. Another country officer reported a similar situation, but found herself driving to local councils to verify if they had received her faxes. She was not asked to do this, but she did not want to fall behind on her targets.

There were also cultural reasons for communication patterns. Antso, country officer in Madagascar spoke about maintaining close links with a government ministry. He was expected to visit the ministry and Gender Links regularly in person:

I cannot come every day here [points to the Ministry]. Just two or three times per month. And for this person, the one in the periphery, someone that can maybe can't come at all unless she walks two or three days. We need to know all of the cases on our first contact with them. What can we do, how can we contact them. For example, before the Summit last year, we had to call 165 people by telephone because more than 80% did not have access.

Antso's quotation is the best example of how it has become increasingly challenging for staff to keep track of the communication needs of individuals. The substantial commitment staff demonstrate to reach individual beneficiaries indicates

responsiveness towards them. However, even a simple task to share information is complicated by having to use multiple modes of delivery. This distracted staff from higher-level concerns relating to the quality or purpose of communicating with them. Thus, reflections on the type or level of participation of beneficiaries through these means was absent.

To counteract this difficulty, Gender Links actively influences ICT use patterns in two key ways. First, it incorporates a one-day training session on IT for advocacy work into its gender mainstreaming programme. Second, country offices reported regularly training people who had no access or low-ICT skills:

We end up having to do lots and lots of IT training [in Mauritius], women themselves don't have email address, and it's easier to communicate with them that way so we try to help them (Bidisha, female regional director)*.*

These strategies contribute towards ICT capacity building, which is particularly important for women, because ICT access is an important aspect of gender inequality that needs addressing (Huyer and Sikoska, 2003). However, these sorts of activities are usually add-ons and are not always counted as part of programming or performance measures.

To gain an overall picture of the types and frequency of ICT that Gender Links used to interact with stakeholders, a simplified diagram of the communication channels observed is presented in Figure 6-1. The categories of stakeholders were compiled from diagrams that the staff I interviewed had listed. The heavier arrows indicate a higher level of frequency of interaction. Interviews and observations occurred primarily within the governance and media programmes, but these are also the organisation's largest programmes. Missing from the diagram are concentric circles emanating from headquarters that indicate how organisational knowledge is disseminated via ICTs, primarily through their website, social media and electronic

newsletters. This diagram says little about the purpose of communication. However, it demonstrates that most communication between staff and beneficiary groups happens through voice-based technologies, whereas, communication between headquarters and country offices is primarily text-based. This distinction is important when understanding the level and purpose of participation within these channels. The next section examines this further.

Figure 6-1 ICT channels at Gender Links
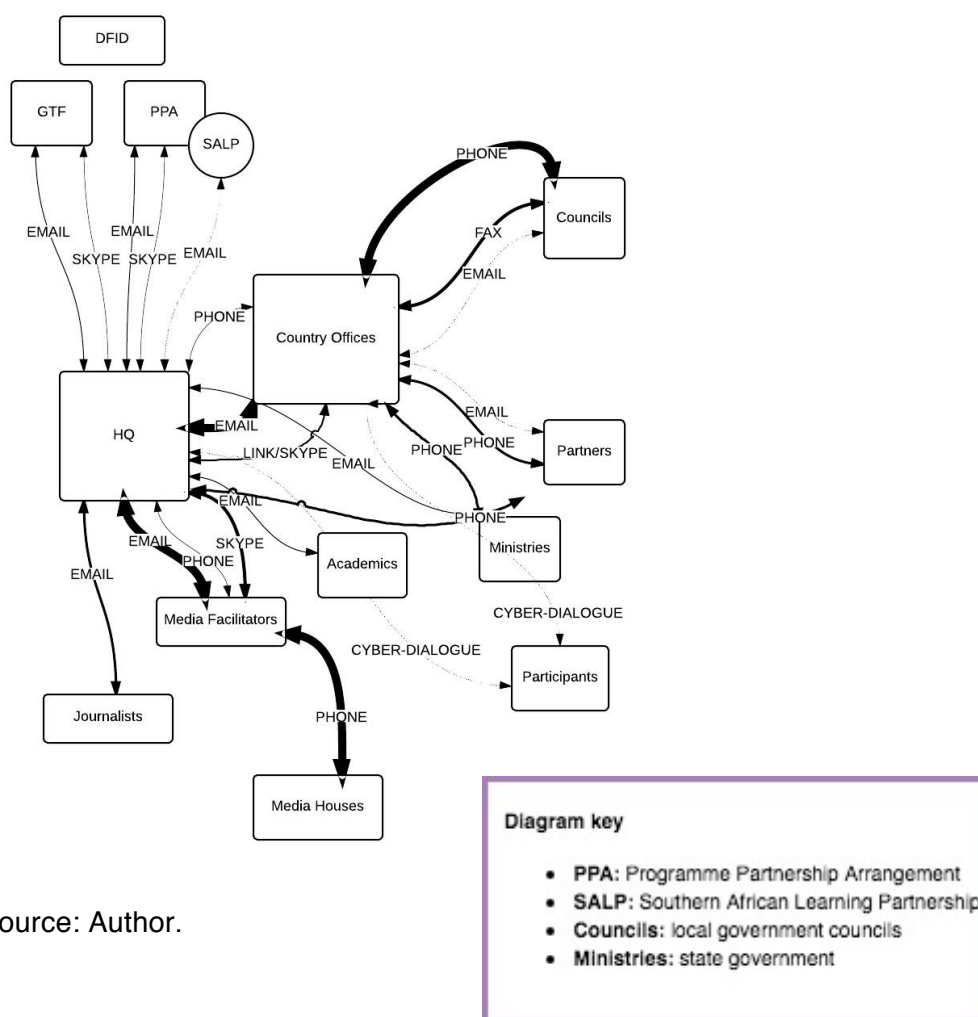
Source: Author.

6.1.3   Defining ICT participation contexts

The communication channels outlined above show how practice typically unfolds through ICT within Gender Links programmes. This section analyses these interaction

patterns according to two key aspects of my conceptual framework. First, attention focuses on how beneficiaries contribute within ICT environments. This enables a deeper understanding of Ebrahim's (2003a) participation levels typically afforded by ICT. Second, I analyse how learning from beneficiaries occurs: as an elicitation activity, as a contribution to learning about organisational practice, or as structural integration. This section therefore builds on the findings of Chapter 5, but focuses specifically on the qualities and characteristics of beneficiary contributions in ICT environments. I end the section by defining the concept of an ICT participation context, which is used within the remainder of the chapter.

During modelling interviews, staff identified strategies to learn from and support beneficiaries through ICT, *"you need diverse platforms to distribute. For distribution of information. For getting people to debate about issues"* (Victoria, programme manager) and *"ICTs are quite powerful in terms of campaigns and mobilising people […] like if [we had] an SMS that is exhaustive and it goes to everybody in the rural area"* (Anesu, programme manager). In line with Ebrahim's (2003a) arguments, staff viewed higher levels of participation, such as vocalising opinions and taking action, as the most desirable forms of interaction for downwards accountability. However, examining ICT practices holistically revealed that this type of interaction does not usually occur. Table 6-2 gives an overview of the types of beneficiary engagement through ICTs. The majority of the time, staff used ICTs to coordinate activities and to elicit information from beneficiaries. Examples of elicitation activities discussed previously include the verification visits (Sub-Section 5.3.3), Changing Lives articles (Sub-Section 5.3.2), and communicating with beneficiaries to coordinate activities (Sub-Section 6.1.2). Most of these contributed primarily to administrative and technical organisational capacities, which contribute to learning or accountability indirectly. In this case, downwards accountability is primarily focused

on organisational accountability and its commitment to its mission and vision (Najam, 1996).

Table 6-2 Overview of ICT participation contexts

Link between learning and accountability	Stakeholder engagement via ICT examples	Representation of beneficiaries	Level of, and reason for inclusion/ exclusion	Type of interaction with beneficiaries	Type of participation context
Elicitation	Coordinating activities via email, phone or fax	Direct	Staff employ strategies to meet stakeholder preferences	Two-way: frequent and conversational.	*Invited*
	Distributing research/ publications	On behalf	Participation is limited by rules governed by the institution. Marginalised perspectives are targeted, but some are not publicised (Chapter 5)	One-way: continuous, recipients of information.	
Component of practice	Electronic newsletters	On behalf	e-Newsletters strategically target SADC partners and provide analysis, so it assumed that partners have adequate access.	One-way: periodic, recipients of information.	*Invited*
	Opinion and commentary service	Journalists represent themselves, articles are edited, and readers engage directly	Inclusive due to blended online and print media strategy, but extent/impact of inclusion is not clear.	Journalists, two-way interaction. Readers, one-way recipients, with potential to comment.	
	Other Web and media services (cyber-dialogues, communities of practice, online commenting)	Both directly with, and on behalf of beneficiaries.	Heterogeneous access patterns and linguistic differences represent substantial challenges to enable widespread direct participation through this medium.	Mixed and temporal (high frequency at times, and low frequency at others).	
Structural integration	Organisational tools (Enterprise system outlined in Section 6.3)	On behalf	Exclusive to Gender Links staff and practice groups.	Mostly takes place through email, contributions are elicited and brought into the ICT environment.	*Closed*

Source: Author.

The second group of activities that occurred through ICTs can be classified as a component of practice. Electronic newsletters, the opinion and commentary service, cyberdialogues and the website facilitated beneficiaries to engage in political, rather than technical and administrative, capacities. Whilst working as a participant observer for the Alliance programme (see Table 4-2), we compiled an electronic newsletter filled with news content related to SADC Protocol themes, research publications, case studies, and Changing Lives articles (Figure 6-2). The Alliance editor wrote a thorough analysis of programmatic progress, such that beneficiaries receive information related to both organisational and programmatic affairs. During the October 2012 management meeting, the Alliance manager did not wish to continue sending the monthly newsletter because it was time-consuming, citing the common complaint that they did not know precisely who was engaging with the material (see also Section 6.2). Managers used Everlytic (http://www.everlytic.co.za/), a software analytics tool, to track click-throughs, but it did not provide enough information about how this information was used and by whom. Regardless of this, the CEO affirmed that the newsletter was one of the only tools in which Gender Links communicated analysis of progress to partners and constituents. This confirmed that downwards accountability is expressed as a commitment to mission in this instance as well. Nevertheless, only one newsletter was released during my research.

Figure 6-2 Screenshot of a Gender Links newsletter
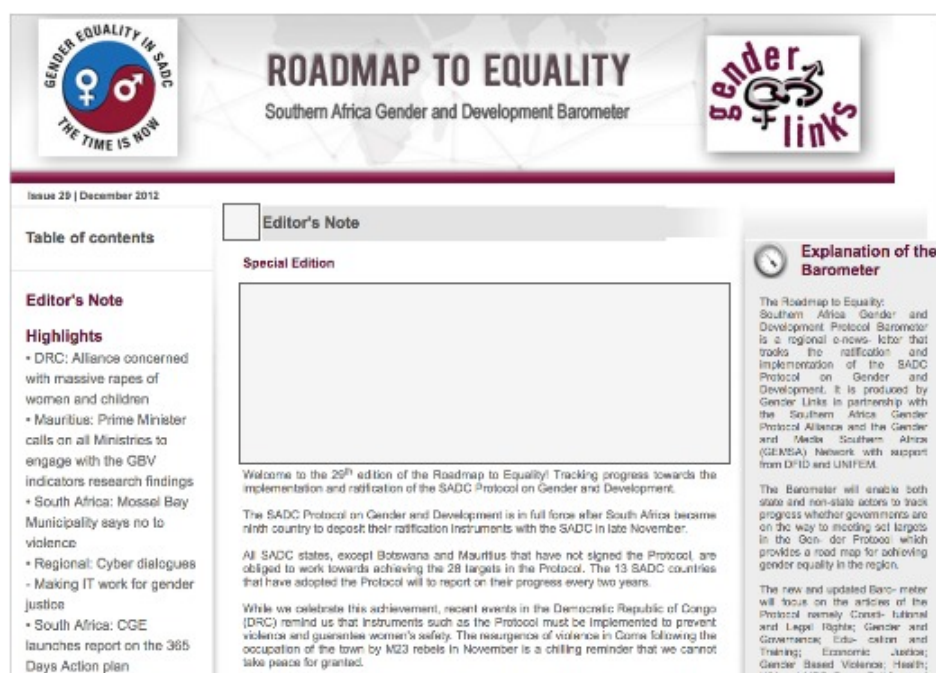
Source: Gender Links (2012c), blinded for confidentiality.

Cyberdialogues and the Opinion and Commentary Service enabled beneficiaries to engage most actively through ICT. Cyberdialogues provided a dedicated forum within which participants voiced opinions, built consensus, and contributed policy and practice suggestions (Sub-Section 5.3.1). However, it was not clear how participants' suggestions were integrated, nor who the participants were. No claims regarding decision-making or independent action by beneficiaries can thus be made. In contrast, the Opinion and Commentary Service was responsive to specific individuals. This Service is an outlet for budding regional journalists, usually beneficiaries of the gender media literacy training programme, who are invited to write articles about gender issues. Victoria, programme manager, spoke about supporting journalists through the process:

they want to keep trying… and what I also did was to send him the links to

some stories that we have published. I think that is the exciting thing when

we are talking about the learning, that then you also build the capacity of

the journalist because of the constant feedback.

Interacting with journalists through email helped journalists to find their voice and to engage with gender issues. This is therefore an example of supporting beneficiaries to develop political capacity. Rather than merely learning about gender issues, these journalists learn to write effectively on topics that are important to them. Successful articles are then distributed on the website and sent to media partners to publish for free. The journalist is given an honorarium, which may also contribute to their well-being.

Furthermore, distributing content through print media enables another beneficiary group, citizens, to be reached. Gender Links systematically collected evidence of print media penetration, relying heavily on their partners and country staff to collect newspaper clippings. However, collecting this evidence was time consuming, and prone to under-reporting. These difficulties shifted their approach to focus on the journalists and Web statistics, which are not a complete representation of penetration or impact. This example demonstrates that there was a higher level of contribution by journalists, and a more passive dimension available to citizens. Nevertheless, the Gender Links editor played a substantial role in crafting opinion pieces, and the journalists did not have the final say in what was published and distributed.

Tension regarding what is posted in Gender Links ICT environments, and who decides this, was also confronted during the 16 Days campaign. I designed a photography challenge to encourage beneficiaries to give meaning to campaign themes by posting photographic interpretations. I and junior headquarters staff posted

photos on Gender Links' Facebook page to encourage others to do the same. These photos were well-received by international campaign managers, who emailed asking if they could republish them: *"we came across the photos you had posted on the Gender Links Facebook page as part of the Campaign, and would love to repost them in our 16 Days social media and communications"* (Personal communication, January 5, 2013). However, only a dozen people participated in the photo challenge. After examining these contributions, senior managers asked us to discontinue the challenge and to post photographs depicting beneficiaries in action instead. Senior managers felt that Gender Links social media should be a means to highlight achievements rather than encouraging beneficiaries to express themselves. This is an example of Gender Links' tendency to favour using ICTs to represent beneficiaries publicly, rather than enabling independent action through ICT.

Cornwall (2002) has argued that the empowerment potential of institutionalised participation contexts can be revealed through critically asking questions about who is included or excluded, and by whom actors are represented within it. My research builds on this notion to define ICT participation contexts as comprising capacity for beneficiaries to participate actively in culturally-relevant ways, capacity to represent oneself, control over one's information and engagement through ICT, and extent to which political empowerment is facilitated by ICT. In general, the most culturally-sensitive ICT engagement strategies contributed only to Gender Links' administrative and technical capacities. Within physical environments, staff act as agents of empowerment and enablers of skills development, but their experiences remain there, apart from their elicitation activities comprising of reporting, interviews and publications. It is concerning that there are only a few instances where beneficiaries are encouraged to participate actively through ICT, through speaking or writing in their own words. There were no examples of participation in decision-making processes. Although independent action through ICT was not easily

understood, it did not seem to be a top priority. Thus, ICT participation contexts may be used by CSOs to justify their own actions, just as Brett (2003) claimed that organisation's may draw on participatory theory to present its image in a particular light. The next two sections continue to build a case that organisational ICTs contribute even fewer opportunities to participate through ICT.

6.2 The Gender Links website: a constitutively entangled evolution

As Surman and Reilly (2003) have argued, websites can be designed to support online collaboration and stakeholder mobilisation. Their view is that enabling participation for these purposes in online fora requires hard work, strategy and commitment. However, thinking about websites in terms of their functionalities fails to take into account how ICT is constitutively entangled in its context. The Gender Links website is the ICT artefact that most clearly demonstrates a dialectic between design and use, providing a record of significant evolution within the organisation. Having control over the website design in a way that responds to their organisational needs has been advantageous for Gender Links. Yet, the organisation has still had to overcome a variety of challenges in order to assert its power and control. The next two sub-sections explore the evolution of the website, and subsequent design challenges, followed by an analysis of website practices.

6.2.1 Shaping the website to meet organisational needs

The merits of Gender Links' website reflect the diversity of their achievements: *"other people look at our website and say wow, this is amazing"* (Lowe Morna)*.* However, the website has undergone numerous evolutions, and Gender Links has had to cope with challenging circumstances in relation to their chosen system and associated developers. This evolution has been impacted by wider international trends in Web

publishing, along with a dialogical process between Gender Links and their Web development company (Grenade). Acknowledging these benefits and challenges is important as this demonstrates the difficulties CSOs face in influencing technology designs to meet their needs.

Gender Links uses a content management system (CMS) to publish their website. I define a CMS for the Web as database-driven software that manages Web-based content publishing and organising, along with an interface for searching and browsing (Sharma and Kurhekar, 2013). CMSs became widely available in the mid-2000s, and the majority of companies that are given credit for innovations in this area are from the USA (Winters, 2003). Gender Links' CMS was developed by a small company based in Johannesburg. The physical proximity of the company to Gender Links was a major benefit because it enabled direct relationships with the company's developers. In 2005, the CMS was feature-rich for the time and offered a What You See Is What You Get (WYSIWYG) interface as well as indexing and media capabilities. The system also incorporated advanced templates in a proprietary software language so that additional features could be built-in by programmers.

However, the CEO reflected that it was difficult for Gender Links staff to use the CMS in the way that it was originally designed because their information management needs differed from those of the CMS company's regular clients:

Our information needs are much much much more complicated than any one of [the company's] other clients because we are very content heavy, we are very data heavy, we've got information, we need to visibilise our data and so on.

In the past, Lowe Morna was able to communicate their complicated needs directly to the company so that they could customise the CMS accordingly. However, in 2011 the CMS company was sold to another South African entity,

and the new owners were not interested in pursuing the development of the acquired system.

During a staff meeting to discuss the website with a Grenade representative, the representative argued that:

- *We are not a service-oriented company anymore.*

- *We are building a platform, and will not be doing customisations.*

- *We have no intention to be all things to all people.*

- *Our template system was too hard to learn and we had to change the platform to remain competitive.*

- *We cannot easily upgrade you to the new system because your existing site is extremely customised* (Summary of representative's speech in meeting notes, January 21, 2013).

Gender Links was informed that the only solution was to upgrade their website to their new product, and that they could no longer provide customisation. However, Gender Links simply did not have the time or financial resources to make the switch.

Gender Links essentially had to fight with the company to gain access to the developer who could help them continue to develop the inherited system. Sharma and Kurhekar (2013) argued that small organisations do not have adequate skills and expertise to build their own websites, and it is more cost-effective and less-burdensome to use a CMS. However, their view does not factor in the long-term challenges of buying proprietary systems, as Lowe Morna stated:

As a result of us screaming and shouting and saying we have so many things we need done and they all seem so simple, why can't we do them?

> *What [they] did was then give us access to [the developer]. Now, things*
>
> *have started moving for us.*

The prospect of moving to a new platform is a significant investment because of the quantity of information published on the proprietary CMS that had been customised to display in particular ways. Since the time of my research, the website has indeed been migrated to a free platform, Wordpress (https://wordpress.org/). Nevertheless, limited resources, fluctuating technological trends, and shifting relationships with developers demonstrate the structural qualities that shaped the design process.

Acknowledging the evolution of ICT does not, however, account for the influence of the accountability context on design decisions. Some of the developments that Gender Links added were rationalised in terms of their funding situation. Lowe Morna prefaced an internal announcement with a description of their values, that Gender Links believes in openness, and providing resources to the general public as a means of education and awareness-raising (Meeting Notes, January 21, 2013). However, by 2014, they increasingly focused on using the website as a means for cost recovery. They implemented a subscription service, a photography shop, and boosted the Web presence of their conference venue. As the CEO said, *"we have to make money with this"* (Lowe Morna). On the one hand, interest in the subscription service could be due in part to what Lowe Morna observed similar CSOs to be doing with their websites, and perhaps also (in my own interpretation through knowing her) due to her character as an entrepreneurial and innovative individual. On the other hand, a large portion of website resources were constructed to support the media programme, yet this programme was not attracting new funding. When programmes come to a close, CSOs are left with difficult choices in terms of managing costs to maintain, administer, or archive valuable resources. Gender Links has paid to migrate these resources to the new platform, and continues to provide these resources at no cost to the end user.

6.2.2　The enactment of multiple website logics

Gender Links has experimented with many of Thompson's (2008) examples of participation architectures through its website. For example, the Gender and Media Community site provided a medium for beneficiaries to write blogs, share content and events and participate in cyberdialogues (Figure 6-3). Over time, these functionalities have been abandoned. Sub-Section 6.1.2 has already suggested that Thompson's (2008) arguments do not apply in the Gender Links context, due to the heterogeneous access patterns and limited scope for structural integration. However, deconstructing the website's practice context contributes a deeper understanding of why this is so. First, I explain how the website design did not encourage staff to interact with it as a medium of action. Second, I explore how the multiple logics that govern how actors contribute to the website conflict with each other.

Figure 6-3 Screenshot of the Gender and Media Community site

Source: Screenshot taken by Author on March 3, 2013.

The website was used by staff in different ways according to their roles and responsibilities. It has both facilitated and exasperated work processes. As outlined in Chapter 5, country officers and junior level staff were primarily responsible for updating and maintaining the content on the website, along with a part-time Web developer. As a medium of practice, one of the assumed advantages of the CMS is that it enables staff and beneficiaries with little technical knowledge to add and update content items easily (Sharma and Kurhekar, 2013). There are, however,

idiosyncrasies due to the interface and structure of the CMS that create problems for staff members:

> *[HQ Assistant] spends most of his time updating the website, he uploads case studies and commentary service pieces. He gets frustrated when the country officers upload items but they don't use the spell check or they forget to tick a box and the item doesn't display properly. He has to go in himself and fix it (Field notes, October 4, 2012).*

The assistant's routine to check on other's work was frustrating for him. He was annoyed by his colleagues and by the CMS. I experienced this frustration as well, since one of my jobs as a participant observer was to improve the consistency of the Media Centre of Excellence (CoE) pages: *"HTML code is automatically generated via the WYSIWYG editor, and changing the tables around is really frustrating. After I did the first one, I just assumed I could copy the structure, and ended up debugging the second one for an hour!"* (Field notes, Oct 17, 2012). Tasks that are assumed to take short periods of time end up getting inflated for frequently unpredictable reasons. In both instances our skills and abilities are probably better suited to doing other things, but we ended up spending more time on these sorts of tasks, which can be both tedious and frustrating.

Furthermore, contributing to the website affected how staff perceived the impact of their efforts. Anesu, a programme manager, said *"'these people are not interested,"* referring to the practitioners that she was hoping to reach by posting research about gender-based violence on the website. I asked why, and she felt as though she writes content for the website without knowing whether people are engaged. Likewise, Victoria, another programme manager, felt the same way, stating that *"all those sleepless nights and for what? Less than 100 hits."* In one sense the content is able to reach more people through Web publishing, but the uncertainty and

lack of connection with people constrains the employees' sense of value of the activity.

Research into CSO websites has focused on analysing content to evaluate potential outcomes of publishing content on the Web (Bruszt *et al.,* 2005; Yang and Taylor, 2010; Kingston and Stam, 2013). However, such research does not acknowledge that there are dual logics to contributing content to CSO websites. Staff viewed the purpose of the website as being to show donors the success of their work. Officers responsible for updating the Governance CoE pages overtly shared their dislike for the activity with me during a training session. The officers did not have a clear idea about what the pages were for, or who would be using them. Many officers complained of not being able to write in English, and when I asked them why the descriptions of the CoEs needed to be in English, they responded that they assumed that the audience for the pages to be donors, as opposed to community members of the local council constituencies. Joyful, another programme manager, explained:

> *It makes everything so visual we put things on the website it's different from*
> *when you write a 10-page report, when the donor goes there and they see*
> *women making a change, making a difference, they look at the photos and*
> *they see something that's happening.*

In other words, the use of the website was in large part viewed as reinforcing upwards accountability relationships, instead of transforming the way that country officers viewed or enacted their roles. Thus, competing logics for contributing content can help to explain Yang and Taylor's (2010) finding that website content alone does little to encourage beneficiaries to get involved.

Gender Links also struggled to meet multiple linguistic needs, serving populations in English, French and Portuguese. Translation within the CMS was not originally available, and translating content takes time, and must be manually

managed. As a result, most of the website content is in English, with key resources, such as Changing Lives articles (Sub-Section 5.3.2), research publications, and Opinion and Commentary articles, also being available in French and Portuguese.

Rather than being a medium to enable learning about organisational practice, Gender Links learned from its website practice, reconfiguring it, in turn, to build on their successes. However, this reconfiguration has not been met with increased levels of decentralised decision-making and control for staff or beneficiaries. Instead, community environments have evolved to provide more structure and direction for participants, thus emulating their technical/managerial approach to knowing and doing. Figure 6-4 outlines the evolution of the Gender Media Community of Practice process, originally pictured in Figure 6-3 Likewise, their limited resources were spent on their most successful programmes rather than providing all website content in all languages. Such decisions are evidence that controllability and responsibility dimensions of accountability have been favoured over responsiveness.

Figure 6-4 The Gender Media Community of Practice process

The process of the Community of Practice project is as follows:

- Notice, supporting materials and guiding questions will be sent out to educators and students by the 15th of every month or following weekday if it is on a weekend.
- The online chat will take place on the 25th of every month or following weekday if it is on a weekend.
- The summary of the chat will be included in the GMDC newsletter on the next month. Contributions will be invited to the wiki.
- Contributors have until the 10th of the month to add content.
- The product will be finalised by the 15th of the month and sent out to all participants with the notice of the next discussion.
- The product will be uploaded to the website and a link sent out in the newsletter on the first of the month.

Source: Gender Links (2017a).

This sub-section has emphasised that the website platform shaped individual and institutional accountability properties, such as dislike for website-related routines, limited direct engagement with beneficiaries, and restrictive platform functionalities. These aspects, in addition to strategic engagement (Surman and Reilly, 2003) and inclusive access (Social Impact Lab, 2016), play a role in determining the extent to which staff inhabit the website environment. Likewise, competing logics for contributing content to different areas of the website confounded staff engagement with the use of this tool for learning and accountability. These findings show that the diverse routines that develop through continued design and use of the website played a part in reinforcing the status quo. These conditions have encouraged the organisation to move away from the website as an architecture of participation, in favour of strategies that engage beneficiaries in structured and directed ways which may enhance learning as a component of practice. However, without participation, the website does not significantly support explanatory or responsive forms of accountability (see also Section 5.3.2).

6.3   Organisational ICT: Gender Links' enterprise system

As Murphy's Law would have it, this would also be the week when a visiting scholar from Canada at HQ (ironically studying how a small NGO uses IT to leverage its work!) inadvertently brought our email down four times through a Mac laptop that spewed out spam. I witnessed at first hand how Gender Links IT systems affect our satellite offices, and how dependent we all are on IT (I hope we have learned some IT security lessons!). (Lowe Morna, Email communication, Oct 22, 2012).

Gender Links decided to change their institutional communications platform after an emergency happened in 2012. The opening quotation is from an email I received on

October 22nd 2012. The CEO had been in Mauritius the previous week, and received a mid-term evaluation from DFID that required amendments within a short turnaround timeframe. Gender Links was also submitting two new funding applications to DFID due on October 18th, 2012 that required significant oversight on Lowe Morna's part. It was my fault that their email systems had failed, and without email, the team would not have been able to meet the deadlines.

This was not the sort of outcome I had envisioned my presence having. Nevertheless, after the dust had settled, and the deadlines had passed, the senior managers took steps to avoid the same thing from happening again in the future. Luckily, they worked past their negative feelings towards me and invited me to a meeting with their IT service provider to discuss the possibilities. At the time, Gender Links was using an internal server for their email and when a computer virus I had accidentally uploaded on my computer increased their monthly bandwidth allocation, access to their email was being choked externally. The IT provider suggested that a cloud-based enterprise system could remedy their email problems.

The following sub-sections analyse these events to demonstrate how my experiences conflicted with those of the organisation and I explore what the consequences of these disjunctures are for learning and accountability.

6.3.1 Selection and implementation of the enterprise system

Powell *et al.* (2012, p.10) remarked that "the size of development sector investment could have been - and still is - sufficient to sustain a substantial community of open source developers able to produce software specifically designed with development sector realities and needs in mind." This suggests that donors and CSOs could work together to build appropriate ICT environments that respond to their joint needs. However, as Section 6.2 highlighted, organisations must often purchase or build their

own ICTs, and these long-term costs are not often included in development aid relationship contracts. Furthermore, ICT4D literature tends to conceptualise ICTs as responding to specific development objectives and practice needs (Klabbers and Kruiderink, 2007; Butler *et al.*, 2008), whilst organisation studies may focus on organisational fit of enterprise systems (Baptista, 2009; Strong and Volkoff, 2010). These studies do not take into account the contextualised nature of making organisational ICT choices, and that CSOs may not be in a position to build or select appropriate systems. This sub-section focuses on Gender Links' selection process for the enterprise system, and involved only myself, the CEO, the COO and a member of the finance team. It highlights the time and money constraints that weighed heavily on the decision-making process.

In contrast to the idea that organisations can first consider their needs, and then consider systems that meet those needs, the main factor for the systems that we were considering was availability. We considered Microsoft Office 365 and Google Apps because the IT provider was familiar with those systems, and the directors valued his expertise and service. The provider stated that he was not biased, but had experience implementing both platforms and intuitively recommended the Microsoft option due to his knowledge of the organisation and work patterns. Cost was another factor, and the Finance Manager created a spreadsheet that outlined the cost against the features offered as well as the quotes that the service providers offered to implement and support the transition along with a service agreement. Gender Links was accustomed to working with two IT service providers and needed to weigh the pros and cons of establishing a long-term relationship with either or both of them and how this would play out. The last factor was the features of the platform itself. In this case it was mostly based on current organisational norms as well as the opinions of the CEO and COO on how easy to use the staff would find the tools: *"people know Microsoft"* (Rama in Field notes, November 20, 2012).

I was not involved in the final selection of the platform or the planning of the implementation phase, but I was not advised about this eventual exclusion. Before I went home for the Christmas break, I had arranged with the CEO to carry out a half-day workshop with staff to discuss information sharing and collaboration problems between headquarters and country offices. The workshop format would have involved group discussion to identify the biggest challenges faced by the staff in carrying out their work and then collaboratively finding solutions to joint problems in order to identify appropriate ICT requirements. I argued that discussing the main problems together before selecting a platform would be a good idea, and it could still be the case that Microsoft's platform would be sufficient. The workshop approach I proposed was also part of my initially proposed set of research activities (Appendix 8).

When I returned in January and I asked for the schedule to know when my workshop would take place, I was surprised to see that my session had been cancelled without notice. Since I had left, the organisation had come to an agreement with the IT provider and had already arranged an implementation plan with them. There were two phases to the implementation. The first was immediately to get everyone onto the new email system. They also wanted to implement shared calendars to replace their weekly planners. The second phase of the implementation was supposed to be a more in-depth analysis of their document sharing needs and Sharepoint websites were going to be constructed around these. Microsoft 365 had clearly been chosen as the preferred option.

The workshop that I had intended to give was replaced by a training session for all staff. The session was given by the IT provider and consisted of a walkthrough of the features of the new tools. During the training, about 20 of us were gathered in the conference room together (see Figure 6-5).

Figure 6-5. Gender Links Staff Receive Cloud Training

Source: Author (January 15, 2013).

When we were all trying to use the organisation's WiFi at once, access to the enterprise system slowed to a crawl. Training therefore also slowed down and staff immediately lost interest. The CEO took the opportunity to ask questions about the shared calendars that she was intent on setting up and learning how to use, but the instructor could not answer them, and was only able to follow the standard training that she was familiar with. The CEO, feeling as though precious time was slipping past, interrupted the training session in order to sort out the calendar issue. It was then that I was brought back into the picture and I was asked to help getting the shared calendars set up. I later provided step-by-step training on setting up and using shared calendars for all staff.

I frequently look back to these events and wonder what it was that did not click in my interaction with the CEO and COO. Perhaps I was not convincing with my arguments, perhaps the CEO had little faith in my abilities as a facilitator, or perhaps she simply had more trust in her relationship with the IT provider. I tend to believe it was my fault for not understanding the organisational culture sooner. For an organisation that is run from the top-down, proposing a collaborative working session was probably not the right choice on my part.

That being said, I still believe that my proposed process would have been more effective. Whilst cloud computing technologies, especially when provided for free to not-for-profit organisations (Mlilo and Padare, 2014), did significantly reduce costs, the gains in productivity have benefitted technology and management staff the most. In accordance with Wilkins' (2009) arguments, managerial effort was substantially reduced because they no longer needed to maintain and support proprietary servers and system failures. However, difficulties identified in Section 6.1.2 related to accommodating beneficiaries through heterogeneous communication channels have not been addressed. The next sub-section further analyses how and why the enterprise system represents a closed ICT participation context that significantly impacts on learning and accountability.

6.3.2 The influence of ICT on the widening gap between internal and external practice

The enterprise system automatically provides staff with access to internal organisational ICT resources. This environment is designed by foreign corporations to accommodate universal workflow requirements (Boss *et al.*, 2007; Dahiru, Bass and Allison, 2014). This implies that staff will increasingly operate entirely within the enterprise system. Furthermore, as opposed to the website, the design of the system is pre-determined with only limited option to customise the specific system selected
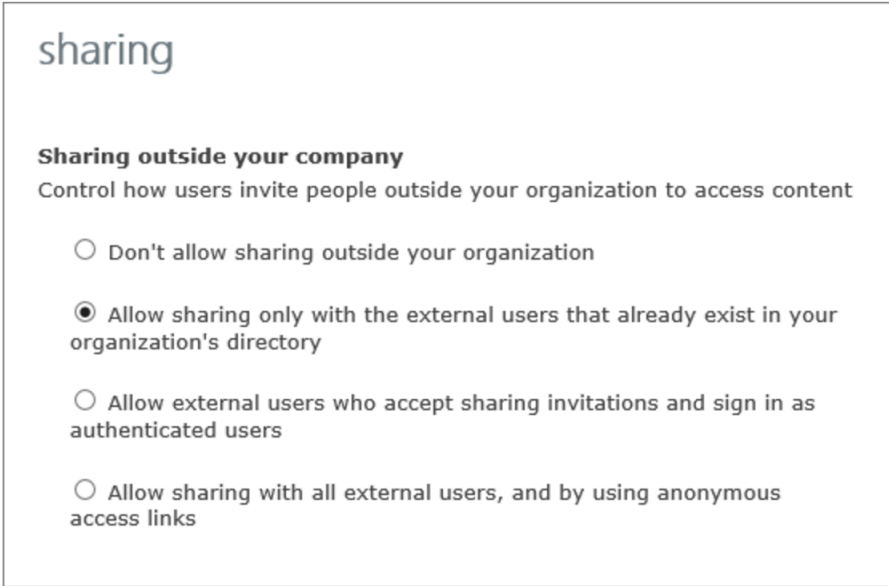
(Mlilo and Padare, 2014). This sub-section investigates how and why the enterprise system contributes to the dominant practices taking place. Additionally, I argue that enterprise systems impose additional boundaries between staff and their beneficiaries.

Organisation studies discourses tend to focus on issues with implementation and use of enterprise systems by staff (Boudreau and Robey, 2005; Strong and Volkoff, 2010). Organisations are viewed independently of their clients and external actors, and private access to the enterprise system is not viewed as an issue. However, moderated access to enterprise systems is problematic for CSOs, who may benefit from working more collaboratively with beneficiaries and external partners. At the time of research, Gender Links was charged a per user annual fee which has since been waived as part of Microsoft's donation package (Mlilo and Padare, 2014). Only staff are given accounts with full access to the enterprise system.

Having an account facilitates certain internal activities. For example, all integrated tools come with the potential to search for, or to share information with all other account holders. Prior to the enterprise system, sharing documents between offices happened through email. Now, Gender Links uses Sharepoint websites to facilitate internal document sharing and versioning. It is possible to enable external access of these websites, by distributing invitations or access links (Figure 6-6). However, it is most common for beneficiaries to contribute to documents through elicitation activities like the verification visits (Sub-Section 5.3.3) or Changing Lives interviews (Sub-Section 5.3.2). Furthermore, if the difficulty applicants had to submit Summit Award applications are any indication (see Sub-Section 5.2.3), it seems unlikely that most beneficiaries would be willing and able to contribute regularly to written documents posted to Sharepoint websites. Unfortunately, my research ended before the second implementation phase, during which the Sharepoint websites were implemented. However, Figure 6-7 confirms that the Sharepoint websites were

implemented for internal document and information sharing primarily, in line with an objective knowledge management approach (Hislop, 2005). Such an approach concerns itself with access to information, rather than focusing on how and why people may participate.

Figure 6-6 Granting access to external contributors in Sharepoint

Source: https://support.office.com/en-us/article/Manage-external-sharing-for-your-SharePoint-Online-environment-c8a462eb-0723-4b0b-8d0a-70feafe4be85 (accessed on March 7, 2017).

Figure 6-7 Outcomes of the enterprise system implementation

Area	How the Intranet has been used	Benefits
Knowledge Management and Learning	• Uploading of case studies and storage. • Learning centre section that covers development , learning journeys and coaching.	Fosters the management pillars for knowledge and learning organisation through: • Collect knowledge • Capture knowledge • Share knowledge • Store knowledge
Creation of GL SADC Village	• Collaborative work of all staff in one shared space. • Consultants can upload and edit case studies from intranet.	• Geographical distances reduced to an internet village. • Easy tracking of the work of consultants and editing.
GL governance and systems	• Latest policies and regulations. • Forms and corporate stationery.	• Staff are always up to date with the latest policies and regulations • Uniformity in our systems
Green Revolution	• Only print when you need to.	• Policies , case studies are only printed in final state and when needed otherwise everything is accessed in electronic form.
Consolidated GL calendar	• Tracking of all events happening within the GL community.	• GL staff are well informed of all activities taking place

Source: Mlilo and Padare (2014, p.169).

The shared calendar feature was implemented before I left, during which I observed two key accountability outcomes. First, the feature set of the enterprise system prompted managers to make use of the tool without a thorough examination of practice implications. Second, the lack of customisability of this feature led to problematic effects, which eventually led to its abandonment. Initially, it seemed that sharing calendars between offices did respond to a clear internal managerial problem between headquarters and country offices. If managers could access and compare the whereabouts and availability of country staff quickly, it could reduce time spent filling in the weekly planning template, and emailing these.

To implement the calendar feature, a how-to note was circulated, and the CEO subsequently mandated calendar use, providing guidelines on what to include:

Every week going forward, as per the how to note […]:

1. Staff members must input their calendar updates each Friday before the coming week; Managers for the unit for calendars shared with all.

2. Staff/Managers must also retrospectively make changes to the calendar based on what they did so that the calendar reflects how your time was actually spent.

3. Within units, staff must share their individual calendars with their manager and update their own calendar.

4. Monthly institutionally shared calendars need to be printed out for inclusion in the monthly M&E starting Feb (for Jan) (Lowe Morna, Email communication, January 25, 2013)*.*

This email responded to staff who were not consistently filling in details. Soon thereafter, I moved to Mozambique, and country staff informed me that updating and changing the shared calendars was more time consuming than updating a document. At first, managers asked staff to substitute the weekly plan for filling in the calendars. However, when they discovered that they could not print these out to include in their monthly M&E reports, managers then changed their minds and asked staff to fill in both.

Sibia did not see the value in doing both:

They said do the calendar, and this week I receive an email saying that we are supposed to tell whatever we are doing this week the same way we were doing last year. If I'm doing the weekly planning, I'm telling you, I'm ignoring the calendar. What's the point of doing the two things.

Sibia was not the only staff member who felt this way, as Lowe Morna wrote "*every one of the shared calendars received to date is empty; this needs to be rectified for January and going forward.*" Without being included in attempts to change work patterns, the only power staff have is to resist. These findings agree with Boudreau and Robey (2005) who argued that although enterprise systems attempt to

standardise ways of working, staff will often resist and reinvent as much as they can. At the same time, there was also a mismatch between the specific requirements of the organisation and its generic offerings, which happens when features are not adaptable to precise needs (Strong and Volkoff, 2010).

Moreover, my research emphasises that enterprise systems contribute to the gap between internal and external communication patterns. For instance, all Gender Links staff were required to be available by email or phone practically all the time:

Yes and we are even held like in our performance agreement there is even this line that says responsiveness and communication whereby you're supposed to be responding to emails from senior management within an hour (Aneso, programme manager)*.*

Wherever I am, it doesn't matter which rural area, I'm replying to emails. Excellence within 24 hours. [Blackberry Messaging] and so on. I wouldn't even lie to say I'm always alert and receptive (Pamela, country manager)*.*

The risk of introducing such constant communication standards is that staff may feel obliged to pay closer attention to keeping managers informed, rather than delivering on their development objectives. As a result, the enterprise system facilitates the widening gap between internal and external practices.

Prior research has focused on email (Saeed, Rohde and Wulf, 2008; Barley, Meyerson and Grodal, 2011), intranets (Pan and Leidner, 2003; Janes, Patrick and Dotsika, 2014), and specialised tools (Jensen, 2005; Maron and Maron, 2007) to accommodate the ICT needs of development organisations. As a conglomerated package of these, enterprise systems represent a qualitative shift in the concentration of power regarding control over organisational ICT practice, because it is assumed that all practice needs are taken care of. Moreover, enterprise systems establish a

clear boundary between staff and beneficiaries in the practice context. Beneficiaries do not typically have access to the enterprise system, and interact with staff only within the physical or website environments. Yet, staff are increasing drawn into the enterprise system due to organisational culture, roles and responsibilities, and ease of use.

6.4 Conclusion: the disempowering effects of ICT

This chapter builds a case for greater awareness and understanding of the structural impacts of ICT, and of participation within ICT environments. My approach converged on analysing how and why staff and beneficiaries participate in ICT environments by drawing on Ebrahim (2003a) and Cornwall (2005). It also applied the ICT empowerment framework (Section 2.4) to examine interactions between managerial interests, staff role perceptions and technology providers in shaping meanings of ICT. My research has uncovered clear biases in two key areas: how participation is enacted within ICT environments, and how ICT choices are made. A summary overview is depicted in Figure 6-8.

Figure 6-8 An overview of participation in ICT contexts
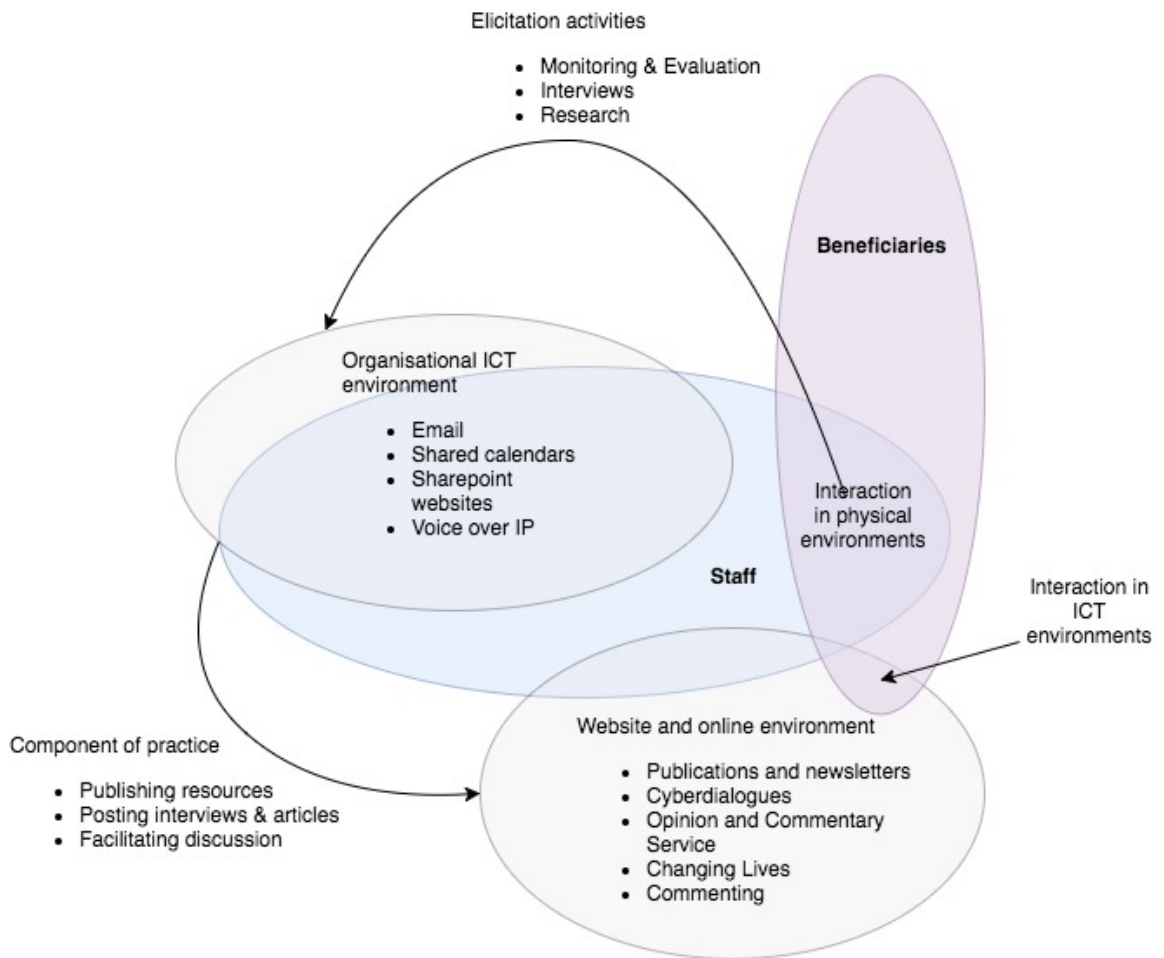
Source: Author.

Regarding participation, staff and beneficiaries, depicted by the coloured ovals, interact primarily in physical environments, and to a much lesser extent in ICT contexts. Communication channels that are inclusive to beneficiaries, such that they have the potential to participate by contributing actively, were primarily used for administrative and technical purposes, whereas, for ICTs supporting political activities, Gender Links maintained editorial control and decision-making power. In contrast, organisational ICT environments, within which beneficiaries are excluded, ICT practices facilitated processing information elicited from beneficiaries through M&E, research and interviews. Resources are then published through the website,

and distributed in research publications and newsletters. Gender Links' bias is thus to represent beneficiaries and distribute resources in public fora.

A bias towards a product orientation, rather than a people orientation when making organisational ICT choices was also apparent. We saw in Chapters 4 and 5 that as the development aid chain grows more complex, not only is it increasingly challenging to ensure actors fulfil their obligations, but that the strategies used to increase controllability shaped the ways that staff perceive their roles. In this chapter, it seems more and more apparent that controllability is sought through all of Gender Links' ICT infrastructures. This is especially true when ICT is viewed as a means to produce results. However, my research shows that organisational ICT choices are not straightforward, due in part to the impact of results-based agendas on CSOs and the availability of appropriate technology and service providers. Gender Links has always experimented with technology as an architecture of participation, however, a host of factors came together to focus their efforts on delivering results. These included the challenging technology provider, the evolution of the website, and the difficulty of measuring effects of beneficiary engagement through ICT. Furthermore, ICT infrastructure costs are not factored into development aid contracts. As such, CSOs will find it difficult to examine beneficiary needs first, when free software donations lie in wait.

Overall, these biases do not address power-relations in accountability processes, thus leading me to conclude that ICTs have not led to significant empowerment gains across Mayoux's (2001) various forms of empowerment in this case study. Although Gender Links invests considerable resources in using ICT to strengthen its explanatory accountability by making some information available on its website, it does not seem that enabling beneficiary engagement with this material has been of equal importance. Often what is implied in creating necessary conditions for ICTs to be used for progressive social change is to level the playing field in terms of

capabilities, access and control over information and internet-mediated communication (Mansell, 2002). This suggests a need to refocus efforts to ensure that the majority of development programme participants have the capabilities to interact and engage in ICT environments, instead of giving the advantage to organisational staff members as the clear minority (Powell *et al.*, 2012). This objective becomes difficult to justify in the context of results-based development practice that is focused on delivering results for donors that are not necessarily related to these ideals. My research suggests that in order for ICTs to influence downwards accountability positively, attention must be paid to the multi-faceted power dynamics between actors, technology providers, and the constitutive entanglement of actors within their ICT environments.

CASE STUDY 2

LA COLOMBE, CROSSROADS INTERNATIONAL AND GLOBAL AFFAIRS CANADA

Chapter 7

THE CONTEXT OF ICT, LEARNING AND ACCOUNTABILITY IN CASE STUDY 2

The second case study focuses on Canada's Crossroads International, and Togo's La Colombe. Crossroads' main funder is Global Affairs Canada (GAC), which was formerly known as the Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development (DFATD), and prior to that, as the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA). Crossroads is a long-time recipient of GAC's volunteer cooperation programme (VCP), which provides funding to send skilled Canadian citizens and permanent residents abroad to work with local CSOs (GAC, 2016). A primary difference between the DFID-Gender Links case and Case Study 2 is the significance of the historical context in shaping learning and accountability. The chapter therefore begins by outlining key aspects of Canadian international cooperation and volunteering unique to this case, and then situates the actors within this context. Section 7.4 then engages with empirical findings to establish the dominant learning and accountability themes, and the implications for meanings and uses for ICT in this context. Detailed empirical analysis follows in the next two chapters, focusing on the ways that ICTs have actually manifested for learning and accountability in this case study.

7.1 A brief history of Canadian international cooperation

A central difference from the DFID-Gender Links case is that the VCP has been a cornerstone of development aid to CSOs in Canada since the late 1960s. CSOs have a long history and tradition in Canadian development aid (Morrison, 1998; Barry-Shaw and Jay, 2012), but during this time Canadian CSOs have faced certain cyclical struggles that have inhibited their capacity to enact substantive social change. This is partly due to increasing intertwining of government and VCP recipient relationships (Barry-Shaw and Jay, 2012; Cliche, 2014). This sub-section identifies the conflicting ideologies that have caused tensions in their relationships. It also argues that their respective ideologies have evolved due to conflicts between the actors.

The objectives of the first Canadian "NGO programme", established in 1967, as described by the director, a Malaysian-born Canadian named Lewis Perinbam were: 1) to tap into the knowledge and resources in the CSO sector; 2) to enable collaboration between CSOs and government; and 3) to find ways to enable Canadians to participate in international development (Morrison, 1998, p.69). These objectives reflect a technical/managerial framing of collaboration between government and CSOs, which continues to exist within the current VCP, and is similar to DFID's initial aid programmes which focused on developing strong relationships with a select number of established UK CSOs (Section 4.1). In Canada, CSOs viewed collaboration differently than GAC. Many VCP recipients have espoused a *solidarity ideology*, which frequently positioned CSO actors as radicals standing in opposition to the government (Barry-Shaw and Jay, 2012).

In contrast to Perinbam's intent, the solidarity ideology is deeply rooted in challenging the dominant political structures of development. CSOs were influenced by the Quebec sovereignty movement, along with other social and liberation

movements within Canada and in Latin America (Barry-Shaw and Jay, 2012; Beaudet, Canet and Nguyen, 2013; Canet, 2013). Cliche (2014) offers a useful four-point summary of the solidarity ideology: 1) prioritising the perspectives of poor and marginalised populations, and acknowledging their role as transformative actors in their own right; 2) favouring alternative ideas and practices of development that are grounded in social justice and sustainability; 3) tackling root causes of social inequality and poverty; and 4) collaborating to moderate the negative influence of asymmetrical power within the international cooperation system. The last point suggests that many CSOs believe that it is possible to influence change from within the current system.

Tensions arose between GAC and recipients when their priorities and methods did not match. The first "chill effect" happened in 1975 when "CIDA cut funding to the [Canadian Council for International Cooperation] to appease External Affairs and to teach the young radicals a lesson" (Barry-Shaw and Jay, 2012, p.147). More recently in 2009, relationships became tense when GAC selectively revoked funding from certain CSOs for overtly demonstrating political views in opposition to the Harper Government (Laverdière, 2014; McLeod Group Blog, 2014).

GAC has also created tension through uncertainty. In 2010, GAC held consultation meetings with VCP recipients, intending to change the focus and scope of the programme. GAC exceeded timelines to launch the next round of funding, and recipients were left in the lurch. In 2012, Crossroads was given a 1-year extension to October 2013 until GAC decided about its future. This uncertainty led many recipients drastically to reduce programmes (Shane, 2014). Although many Canadian organisations seek to diversify funding sources, so as to reduce dependency on government funding, Brown (2012) argues that access to funds provided by private foundations and other bilateral donors to Canadian CSOs is limited in comparison to

UK or US-based CSOs. However, it could be that Canadian CSOs adopt approaches that simply do not resonate with international donors.

These tensions have had two prominent effects. The first is a significant degradation of trust between the actors (Cliche, 2014). Second, CSOs adopted many aspects of GAC's results-based managerial ideology because of this dependency (Barry-Shaw and Jay, 2012). This observation is consistent with wider reflections on the homogenising effects such dependency has on CSOs internationally (Desai and Imrie, 1998; Wallace, 2004; Andrews, 2014). My research examines the current status of the interaction between solidarity and technical/managerial ideologies at play, and contemplates how ICT contributes to accountability in this context.

7.2   Development volunteers

The second component of the GAC-Crossroads-La Colombe case that is substantially different from the DFID-Gender Links case is the role of volunteering in its development approach. However, development volunteers are not easily defined due to the diversity of where volunteering takes place, the temporal scale, the purpose of volunteering and who benefits from it (Smith, Ellis and Brewis, 2005; Georgeou, 2012; Schech, Mundkur and Skelton, 2015). I encountered two types of volunteers in Togo: Canadian international, and Togolese national. Volunteers in this thesis are Canadian citizens and permanent residents, who are selected to fulfil a *mandate* based on qualifications and experience. Mandates ranged from four to twelve months, and they received a monthly stipend to cover living costs. All volunteers are obliged to complete an inter-cultural training course prior to departure and to fundraise 2000 CAD for their project. Togolese volunteers, referred to henceforth as PROVONAT[6], are young Togolese nationals who participate in a work experience programme

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[6] National Voluntary Service Promotion

funded by UN and French agencies (Ministère du Développement à la Base, 2012). PROVONAT are assigned to Togolese CSOs, are also given a stipend and may be relocated within the country.

Many concepts of volunteering are informed by an ethic of community service, and *doing good* for the sake of the greater whole rather than material or individual benefit (Georgeou, 2012). In practice, volunteers, CSOs and donors frequently have ulterior motives for engaging with volunteering. Tiessen (2012, p.44) argued that Canadian youth participating in volunteer abroad programmes generally had personal growth motivations, which represent "a one-directional flow of benefits from the global south to the northern-based volunteers." In contrast, Schech *et al.* (2015, p.364) argued that "Northern volunteers working together with Southern counterparts on a task defined by the host organisation can create personal spaces of learning, exchange and trust." In my experience, I volunteered in Morocco to improve my French, but I also supported a secretary to advance significantly within her career. There is truth to both sides, but volunteers quite often stand to gain more than they contribute. Consequently, as Devereaux (2008) argued, volunteers risk contributing to the paternalism of development aid. My research explores the potential use of ICT to resolve this imbalance.

Volunteers may also have difficulty establishing trusting relationships because of asymmetrical power relations. The remuneration that volunteers receive is a contentious aspect of debate, especially when stipends dwarf local salaries. Chambers (1997) argued that mediating power imbalances involves *disempowering* powerful actors*. Volunteers should effectively give up all benefits and freedoms they experience in order truly to contribute to local contexts. However, power can also be used advantageously. Watts (2002) showed that VSO volunteers in Cambodia demonstrated more technical and economic power than locals, yet their attitudes and sensitivities enabled them to use this advantage to share their skills. Chapter 9 draws

on this notion, arguing that dedicated resources were key to influencing the local context, especially where ICT is concerned.

Another theme of research on volunteering has focused on the adaptation processes of volunteers integrating into local communities (Mumford, 2000; O'Malley Floyd, 2013). According to Winkelman (1994), *culture shock* reflects the difficulties people have in adapting to, and coping with anxiety whilst living in different cultures. Similarly, Schech *et al.* (2015) and Georgeou (2012) identified that volunteers undergo an adaptation process whilst building relationships and carrying out their mandates. Volunteers have ideas about their role and mandate prior to entering the field, but upon arrival, they become disoriented, as they begin to adapt and re-negotiate their roles and relationships in context, with many unable to give up control of their pre-conceived notions (Georgeou, 2012). My research situates volunteers within the wider accountability context, and contemplates how ICT contributes to their personal and mutual adaptation.

7.3   Situating the relationships

This sub-section introduces the actors and the development aid relationship between La Colombe and Crossroads. The development aid relationship thus consists of GAC, who provides core funding to Crossroads for its volunteering programme, and La Colombe, who is associated with Crossroads as a local CSO partner. La Colombe receives capacity-building support through volunteers and international cooperation. I focus on La Colombe and Crossroads in this section, introducing them in turn.

La Colombe is an organisation founded in 1990 and based in Togo, West Africa. Its mission is to empower the most marginalised women and children (La Colombe, 2008). It carries out the majority of its activities in the rural prefecture of Vo, with headquarters in Lomé (Figure 7-1). Both Lomé and Vo are situated in the

Maritime region of Southern Togo. The stars in Figure 7-1 (lower) represent the locations of La Colombe offices and places of the activities I visited. The La Colombe office is located about six kilometres from the Vogan village centre in a smaller rural village called Vo-Pedakondji. La Colombe employs four full-time employees, a varying number of short-term consultants, and four to six PROVONAT. It was not possible to obtain La Colombe's overall budget or expenditures because these were viewed as private. Employees reported salary issues, as they fluctuated according to project revenues. They also complained of a staff shortage overall.

Figure 7-1. Map of Togo with close-up of Lomé and Vogan

Source: Screen capture from my personal Google account http://maps.google.com accessed on April 30, 2017.

Togo's population was estimated at over seven million people in 2015 (data.worldbank.org accessed on April 30, 2017). Although the GDP has doubled since 2005, the World Bank's poverty headcount was at approximately 54% in 2011.[7] The 2005 elections were marred by allegations of fraud, violent protests and about

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[7] Poverty headcount measures the percentage of population living on $1.90 a day in 2011 purchasing power parity (http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SI.POV.DDAY?locations=TG).

400 deaths (Guardian, 2005). The present incumbent, Faure Gnassingbe, replaced his father, who previously ruled the country for 38 years until his death. In contrast to these reports of poverty and human rights abuse, Togo is also culturally rich and diverse. There are about 40 languages spoken in Togo, with Ewe the dominant language in Vo (Rongier, 2004). Schooling is conducted in French, the official language, but the majority of La Colombe beneficiaries did not speak French well and required extra lessons to participate in its programmes. This is troubling when considering ICT, because there are very few resources available to Ewe speakers on the Internet (PanAfriL10n, 2015). Chapter 8 engages with the problematic nature of severe ICT inequality further.

Narayan *et al.*'s (2000) *Voices of the Poor* investigation, studied first-hand accounts of those experiencing poverty in developing countries to differentiate it by material and physical needs, as well as the vicious cycle that occurs through powerlessness and exclusion. There is limited empirical research on poverty in Togo. According to La Colombe's strategic plan 2009-2013, over 70% of Togo's population lives in rural areas, within which poverty rates are significantly higher than in the towns. La Colombe attributes the causes of poverty to food insecurity, lack of employment opportunities, high reliance on subsistence farming, and degradation of farming land due to increased population density. In terms of power and exclusion, severe gender inequality and patriarchal social norms affect rural populations. There is also insufficient access to health care, low education rates, and a lack of democratic relations in civil society.

Togolese people have relied extensively on CSOs for service provision and empowerment, especially during 1990s when sanctions against Togo limited development aid resources coming into the country (Guardian, 2005). Resources that are targeted at women typically emanate from foreign sources and are channelled through CSOs. A representative of the Togolese Ministry for Women and Children,

confirmed that CSOs are a primary source of support for women, as she explained, during an interview, how the Ministry acts as a coordinator, rather than a funder or implementer, of development programmes. This is different from the first case study, where local government councils were the institutions tasked with protecting and empowering citizens in Southern Africa.

La Colombe opened a professional education centre for disadvantaged women in 1997, called the Centre for Self-Learning for Women (CAF) (La Colombe, 2008). In October 2013, core funding from Bread for the World (https://www.brot-fuer-die-welt.de/), was ending, and staff were re-assessing the objectives of the CAF during my research. La Colombe also started new projects in agriculture, pisciculture and tourism in 2013. These projects involved women as participants, but women were no longer the target group. The Director, a woman who has led the organisation since its inception, explained:

> *Usually it's when things don't go well that we change. When things go well, we don't change. Maybe we could make it better a tiny little bit. For us, since the 90s, you know the Centre that we opened in '97 and that we continued until today. Now, we have introduced agriculture, small market gardening. Since it has been a new sector for two years, and we want to train only the young people because when we work on the land it's his/her own business. It's like it attracts the young people.[8]*

Switching target groups due to interest from another group, does not mean the position of women has changed significantly since the 1990s. Women in the prefecture of Vo, as in the rest of Togo, are still marginalised (WiLDAF, 2013). Staff I

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[8] Souvent c'est quand ça ne va pas qu'on change. Quand ça va on ne change pas. Mais on peut améliorer un tout petit peu. Nous depuis les 90. (...) tu sais le centre nous l'avons ouvert en 97 et on a continue jusqu'à aujourd'hui, maintenant, nous avons intégré l'agriculture, la maraichage. Comme étant un nouveau secteur depuis deux ans, et nous voulons former que les jeunes sachent que quand on travail la terre c'est sa propre entreprise. C'est comme cela ammener la jeune.

interviewed assumed that the switch was due to greater donor-funded opportunities in agriculture and entrepreneurship. The notion that ICT may support development learning, by enabling better aggregate understandings of which populations are underserved could contribute here. However, Section 9.1 explores why the actors did not view the role of ICT in this way.

La Colombe's partnership with Crossroads began six years ago, and is young in comparison to its other partnerships. Crossroads transitioned from a church-run mission, into a volunteer-driven cultural exchange program, and then into a catalyst for sustainable development (Crossroads International, 2017). In 1997, the Crossroads partnership model was introduced to foster long-term relationships focused on development impact (Crossroads International, 2017). Crossroads focuses on two sectors: 1) eradicating poverty; and 2) advancing women's rights (Crossroads International, 2012b). Crossroads is primarily funded by GAC's VCP (Figure 7-2). These changes to mission have accompanied shifts in organisational structure, such that its five regional offices have been reduced to two. Crossroads' headquarters is in Toronto and there is one satellite office in Montreal. Crossroads employs 21 staff.

Figure 7-2 Crossroads International sources of revenue and expenses
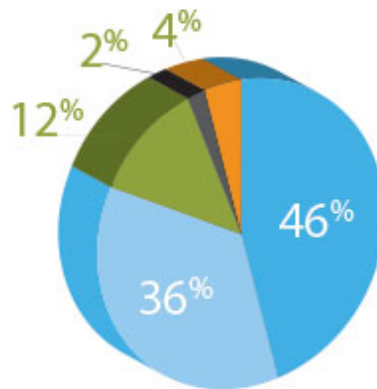
Revenue
(including in kind contributions by volunteers)

DFATD - Volunteer Cooperation Program: 46%
In kind volunteer contributions: 36%
Fundraising: 12%
Provincial government contributions: 2%
Other revenue: 4%
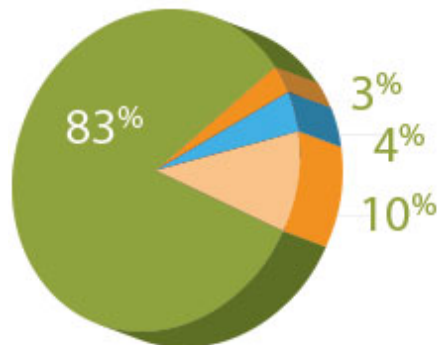
Expenses
(including in kind contributions by volunteers)

Program expenses: 83%
Administration, governance and overhead: 10%
Public engagement program expenses: 4%
Fundraising: 3%

Source: Crossroads (2014).

Crossroads' partnership model is tri-partite. Community-based organisations, such as La Colombe, are paired with one organisation in Canada that works in the same sector (Crossroads International, 2012c). The Canadian and Southern partners work with Crossroads to develop long-term partnership plans, outlining objectives,

activities and intended outcomes along three dimensions: strengthening partnerships, developing organisational capacities, and public engagement in Canada (Bentley, 2009). Canadian volunteers support partnership activities in developing countries. Employees of Southern partners also volunteer within Canadian organisations, and with other Southern partners.

In 2005, Crossroads began regional and sectoral initiatives to support cross-partnership cooperation. In 2012, all partners were invited to Montreal to debate progress since 2009 and to discuss future programmatic aspirations. Crossroads considers this process to be participatory in content and in decision-making. The Board of Directors, for example, includes directors of partner organisations from each region (Crossroads International, 2012a). At the time of research there were no staff with *manager* titles within Crossroads, and *team leader* titles were instituted so as to reflect staff roles as facilitators. However, there are many contradictions that emerge in practice, which are discussed in the following sections.

7.4   The context of ICT, learning and accountability

My fieldwork began in Togo in September 2013. I then travelled to Montreal, Canada in December, until April 2014, during which time I visited GAC which is based in Ottawa. The following three sections explore aspects of the context which are important for understanding the roles of ICT in this case. The next sub-section begins with the donor perspective, followed by Crossroads and finishing with La Colombe.

7.4.1   GAC's results-based management orthodoxy

In contrast to DFID's GTF, which imposed no reporting structure on CSOs at first, GAC has incorporated results-based management principles into its aid management practice for decades. The approach is considered as a rudimentary way for GAC to

work with CSOs. Like Case Study 1, the main role of ICT in GAC's results-based management approach was to gather reports in standard formats. In contrast, GAC demonstrated different needs and uses of this information, which limited their use of ICT in this regard. This sub-section focuses on the GAC Officer's perspective of how the results-based management approach has influenced her views of learning, accountability and ICT.

Each funded VCP is assigned a GAC Officer, who is responsible for overseeing Crossroads' programme. Isabelle, the GAC Officer did not have responsibilities to oversee wider VCP objectives like the Fund Managers or DFID Civil Servant did. She was primarily concerned with keeping abreast with Crossroads' activities, to determine whether planned outcomes were on target:

> *My role is to ensure that what was written in the agreement will be done*
> *and done well… I do the transfers to the partners, who submit their financial*
> *reports, so for sure there is the whole finance aspect. It needs to reflect*
> *what was in the agreement.*[9]

Accountability, as Browne (2006) has argued, is about monitoring a checklist in order to determine what was delivered and to resolve any inconsistencies If there are differences. Although this is consistent with one portion of the GTF fund managers' role, the main difference is that Isabelle is more concerned with the results of the process rather than development outcomes. ICT in this case is framed primarily by this specific purpose of accountability. If Isabelle notices differences between plans and reported outcomes, she reminds recipients that both reports and agreements must be modified to reflect these changes. By working closely with recipients, her assumption is that they can jointly find efficient solutions to obstacles and setbacks in

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[9] Mon rôle c'est de m'assurer que ce qui était écrit dans l'accord va être fait va être bien fait… Je fais les avances, pour les partenaires, qui nous soumet le rapport financier alors c'est sûr qu'il y a tout l'aspect finance. Faut que ça respect ce qu'il y avait dans l'accord.

a way that does not compromise their agreement. In other words, ICT primarily facilitates her to fulfil her role as *accountant*, whilst maintaining purview over *results*. ICT is interpreted as helping to help produce accurate reports, and supporting communication to maintain their relationship. This is different from the GTF, which sought to restructure programmes to fit within a common theory of change framework, and to use ICT to produce synthesised learning products across programmes.

Isabelle also spoke about her other responsibilities in a compartmentalised fashion, such that she regarded filling in details on GAC's project database and a *results by country* spreadsheet, which quantifies programmatic information (results), as separate activities from her duties to oversee the Crossroads programme. The creation of the spreadsheet tool was motivated by the need to process internal and public requests for information: *"we are asked how many volunteers have been sent, by year, by this or this country… How many partners do our partners have… So we try… The management created a new system. Results by country."*[10] However, when I asked her if she used this information, she replied, *"well, no, not for me, it's like it could be useful to others. It was created with the goal of reducing our tasks, but at the same time, keeping it up to date is still…"*[11] She implied that the task was more burdensome than beneficial to her.

Donors claim that results help them learn what is working well (King and McGrath, 2013). However, the Officer did not use aggregated information for learning about practice, relying on her relationship with Crossroads to understand progress. This had a significant impact on how she used ICT within her role for learning. This contradicts much of the literature that positions learning and accountability as

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[10] On se fait demander combiens on envoi de volontaires, par année, par tel tel tel pays. Avec combiens de partenaires nos partenaires ont, alors on essaie… ils ont développé, la direction ici, un nouveau système... Résultats par pays.

[11] Ben non, c'est sûr que moi, c'est comme ça pourrait être utile à d'autre. C'est fait dans le but d'alléger nos taches à nous, mais au même temps, mettre à jour c'est quand-même…

integrally linked (OECD, 2001; Scott-Villiers, 2002; Ebrahim, 2007), demonstrating the crucial connection between learning and practice (McFarlane, 2006). My research discusses how ICT practices contribute to divisions between learning and accountability in greater detail in Section 8.3.

7.4.2   Crossroads' mutual learning approach

Two primary differences separate Gender Links and Crossroads' approach to ICT. First, Crossroads is mainly funded by GAC, and does not have as many programmes and donors as Gender Links. Second, Crossroads does not define its organisational learning approach explicitly. Instead, their approach has been developed through practice, and is based on experiential and formal exchange-based learning theories.

Crossroads' approach to ICT differs from Gender Links because of its scale and accountability structure. Whereas Gender Links opened satellite offices and increased operations to 15 countries, Crossroads shut down offices in Canada and reduced operations significantly in 2009. Programme staff at Crossroads are responsible for maintaining relationships with fewer actors than Gender Links staff. Thus, Crossroads staff find it manageable, yet overwhelming at times, to maintain relationships through email, telephone and Skype. They have not yet needed to develop regimented procedures to collect information. Also, Crossroads' stable relationship with GAC has meant that it has not confronted the same frustrations with external reporting as Gender Links has. Crossroads has therefore not been prompted to critically engage with their use of ICT to support their reporting practices to the same extent.

Another factor is Crossroads' learning approach. During an interview at the Montreal Crossroads office in March 2013, Claire, a team leader who had worked for Crossroads for more than a decade, explained:

It's experiential. It was built on a needs analysis and a feasibility study, it was tested, it was corrected, it was discussed, and it was shown that, yes, [the learning process] can respond to the partners' needs. So, it was much more easy to replicate subsequently.

Claire sketched a diagram of two spiralled and connected circles to represent Crossroads' learning process (Figure 7-3). The two larger dots represent Crossroads partner organisations, Canadian or abroad. As partners learn, they share with each other and create opportunities, which are represented by the offshoot of the third dot. Claire's perspective reveals her belief that more successful exchange happens between organisations working in similar contexts (either domain or geographical). However, Lewis (1998) argued as Southern CSOs grow, gaining direct access to bilateral funding, they may not need partners like Crossroads. In contrast, Crossroads favours the solidarity ideology's framing of mutual exchange, arguing that learning in multiple directions and contexts is beneficial for development. However, ICT is not explicitly implicated in the mutual exchange process.

Figure 7-3. Learning as a mutual, cyclical and evolutionary process
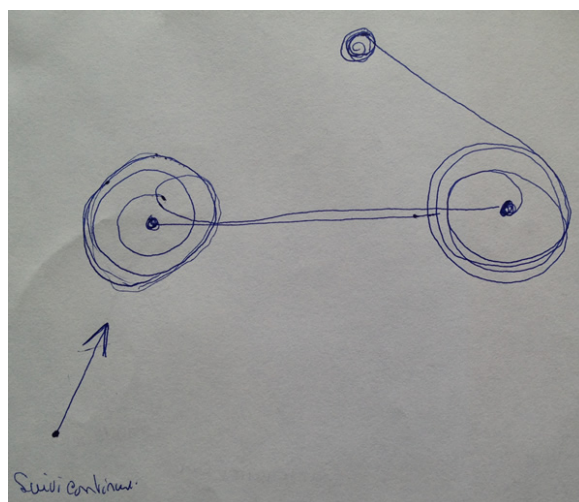
Source: Claire, Crossroads team leader.

Implicitly, Crossroads assumes that ICTs can play a positive role in strengthening learning and relationship-building between Crossroads and their partners. However, supporting staff and partners to gain the technical and practical skills to use ICTs for mutual learning had not been straightforward (Bentley, 2009). Crossroads experimented with low-bandwidth videoconferencing, and a knowledge sharing platform through action research from 2007 to 2010 (Bentley, 2008; 2009). Since then, Claire reported that Skype was the main tool her team used because it was easier to use and more common across the partners. She also stated that Microsoft's Sharepoint was mandated by the former Director, but that she does not use it. She wanted more support and explicit instructions to use it. Her reflections indicated that ICT has not been reflected on as contributing to their learning approach. Their approach to ICT therefore tends to emerge from practice. The implications of this approach to ICT are discussed further in Chapters 8 and 9.

7.4.3   The predominance of hierarchical accountability at La Colombe

The last salient theme refers to hierarchical managerial and social norms at La Colombe which significantly affected learning, accountability and ICT. There are some similarities between Gender Links and La Colombe's managerial style, as both are hierarchically structured. However, this institutional accountability property had significantly different implications for ICT at La Colombe than at Gender Links. The role of ICT for learning and accountability at La Colombe was often unclear since transparency was not prioritised.

In Sub-Section 4.4.2, Gender Links' CEO stressed the responsibility staff have to solve their own problems. Whilst it was clear that there were limits to this, there was ample evidence that staff used ICT to adapt to local conditions and to complete their work (see Chapters 5 and 6). Gender Links staff demonstrated a two-way

process within which they sought direction and feedback on their work through multiple ICT communication channels (Sub-Section 6.1.2). In contrast, at La Colombe, there seemed to be a uni-directional flow of instruction from headquarters to staff in Vogan, which had significant effect on how staff engaged with ICT. Staff were not responsible for solving their own problems, and were instructed to seek direction at all times. The Director's tendency to communicate with her staff via mobile telephone therefore shaped the dominant uses of ICT in this case.

Staff accepted this management strategy, and exhibited a high level of loyalty to superiors. When I asked two PROVONAT if it bothered them to wait for instructions and responses from managers, they both replied that they trusted the wisdom of their superiors. As Koffi, PROVONAT, explained:

I work with La Colombe, and when there is a job, I have my opinion to contribute. And when I offer it, it's up to those that listen to react. Maybe they are too stubborn, or they didn't understand, etc. But it's according to their reaction that we continue the work. If they say that my opinion is not important for the moment, humility means that we need to accept that, their point of view.[12]

Regardless of his acceptance of organisational reality, this approach had problematic effects on learning about practice and responsive accountability. Problems observed within La Colombe's drip irrigation project illustrates these effects.

The project came about after a group of volunteers from Quebec built an agricultural plot at the CAF and La Colombe later obtained funding from a UN agency to install a drip irrigation system. I first noticed problems when I observed two

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[12] Je travaille avec l'ONG La Colombe, et quand il y a un travail, j'ai mon mot aussi à dire. Voilà. Et quand je le dis, c'est à ceux qui entendent, de réagir. Ils sont trop honte ou ils ont pas compris, etc. Mais c'est en fonction de leur réaction que nous on continue le travail. Bon, si ils disent que mon avis, n'est pas important pour le moment, l'humilité dit que il faut accepter, leur point de vu.

contradictory donor visits. During the first visit (see also Section 8.3), La Colombe presented the project as being successful. Observers did not question the team, assuming that equipment was working and that activities were on target. However, during the second donor's visit, by a funding agency, another reality was exposed.

During the donor visit, a meeting was held with the beneficiaries, the people sitting in the chairs facing the tables in Figure 7-4, to discuss the project. I did not understand all that was discussed because they spoke in Ewe, and my colleague translated small snippets. Broadly, beneficiaries complained that yields were not as high as expected, which affected earnings. They also discussed mal-functioning equipment, seeking to understand why the drip irrigation was not working.

Figure 7-4. Drip irrigation project donor visit

Source: Photo credit La Colombe.

I interviewed both PROVONAT working on the project to understand the specifics better, but neither could answer my questions. Julien, PROVONAT, a male who had just returned from an internship in Israel where drip irrigation is practised extensively, was based in Lomé. It was not clear what his role in the project was going to be. He chose not to complete the interview because he was tired. The second interview with Koffi, PROVONAT, a male based in Vogan was more important. He was the main employee for the project, was vocationally trained in agriculture, and worked directly with the beneficiaries. He did not know about the project objectives, but was not concerned as he viewed himself as a team member, with a role to follow instructions:

> *There is the project. There are activities written in it. I do not know the budgetary lines, but, it's the Director who designed the project, and she is always responding to [the donor] and what has to be done. Even if the details are not in the document, she knows what to do. She is the one who gives instructions to the person who can do the activities in the field. And that is me.[13]*

This quotation demonstrates how ICT is primarily used to receive instructions, and is not used to share project information transparently. Whilst Koffi may not take issue with this, it seemed that there were many opportunities and challenges that were not being treated. My impression was that the project intended to support local farmers gain new skills. When the beneficiaries raised their concerns, it seemed they expected to earn a living from the yields. Their views led me to question why the focus of the project's issues was solely on the malfunctioning equipment, rather than the broader implications of sustaining a resource for community members to earn a

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[13] Il y a le projet. Il y a les activités écrits dedans. J'ai pas les connaissances de lignes budgetaire, même, c'est Mémé qui a conçu le projet et elle a souvent la réaction avec FEM et ce qui faut faire. Même si les détails sont pas dans le document, elle sait ce qu'il faut faire. C'est elle qui donne des instructions. À qui à ceux qui peut faire les activités sur le terrain. Et c'est moi.

living from. I did not know what La Colombe had promised the beneficiaries, so it is unrealistic for me to draw wider conclusions. I did, though, ask the Director for project documents, which she promised to send, and never did.

Transparency did not seem to be a priority at La Colombe, in practice in Togo, or through ICT at a distance. It was challenging to meet with the Director to gain insight into her perspective on these matters, as she was traveling and occupied during the research period (Section 3.1). I spent two weeks in Lomé, off and on, to try to speak with her. Headquarters has an open foyer with long tables where PROVONAT and volunteers work. The Director and some volunteers had offices which were closed to keep them cool. A sign posted on the Director's door indicated she was not to be disturbed. I usually waited in the lobby, to try to catch her on her way out. I caught her once for an interview over lunch. Her responses to my questions about the organisation veered towards her knowledge of the Togolese context. When I asked more targeted questions about organisational and ICT practices, she used many phrases that I had difficulty understanding in the moment. For example, she said "*we have become the domain that evolves a bit every day*"[14] whilst speaking about their practice objectives. I had trouble participating in the interview because of the rather vague responses. As such, my data is primarily drawn from observations and interviews with staff and volunteers.

Beyond the predominant hierarchical organisational structure, all staff reported that diverse strategies were employed to learn about the needs of their beneficiaries. Jacques, one of two managers in Vogan, set the tone. He is a well-respected individual within the community who seemed to know everyone wherever we went. He was proud of his university degree in education, and he loved to share his knowledge with his staff through mentorship. He was responsible for overseeing the

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[14] Nous avons devenus la domaine qui évolue un peu tout les jours.

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CAF training programmes, and following up with the learners once they had finished. He spoke about his learning process as a feedback cycle within which he accompanies female learners throughout different stages of their programmes:

Regularly, you have to see how you need to support them, which pedagogical approach you need to develop in order to help them gain consciousness first of the problems. So, you have to stimulate discussions to help them discover, how to even become aware of these opportunities. From my skills, to unlock people, to wake them up, we can understand that, ha! From this way, I can also come, to change…

Jacques was speaking about adapting his learning process and pedagogical strategy to suit the beneficiaries' needs. He attributed his success to his background, but because he was a manager he had greater control over his role. I did not observe any ICT practices related to planning, documenting or reporting outcomes of these strategies.

From my perspective, it was difficult to understand certain aspects of La Colombe's practice without written documentation. This documentation exists, but was not shared with me. I also questioned my need to make sense of development by examining written documentation, which falls into the trap of technical/managerial patterns of thinking. I observed very few examples of staff interacting with beneficiaries through written text, and I observed only positive work with beneficiaries. Nevertheless, there were many contradictions apparent in the design and communication of projects, which suggests that far greater transparency is warranted. However, it is difficult to envisage how ICTs can positively contribute to learning and accountability in this absolute hierarchical accountability context. Chapter 8 builds on this contextualised understanding to highlight that ICT factors are only partly to blame

for limited ICT-use in this case study. Chapter 9 explores the ineffectual attempts of volunteers to use ICT to influence change within the organisation.

7.5   Conclusion: the layering of accountability

The two main aims of this chapter have been to situate the case study in its historical context, and to provide qualitative insights into the learning and accountability practices that emerged from my experiences with them. It primarily sought to draw distinctions between this case study and the previous one regarding the meanings of learning and accountability in context. As Section 8.3 explains in greater detail, formal procedures are informed by technical/managerial systems. Informally, the actors displayed preference towards interpretive/practice-based learning strategies. My research suggests that there is duality at work, in which participants selectively focus on elements from both systems of knowing and doing to match the needs and constraints of the dominant accountability relationships, as Ebrahim's (2007) accountability model outlines. However, there were three key patterns that emerged, which emphasise the peculiar position of volunteers across inter-organisational accountability relations.

The first pattern was the hierarchical accountability structure of La Colombe, expressed by La Colombe's staff demonstrating strict loyalty to their superiors. A tension emerged between the volunteers and the Director because volunteer mandates are negotiated between Crossroads, La Colombe and the volunteer. Volunteers arrive in local contexts, with a priority to integrate into organisations as staff members, yet they expect to maintain some control over their mandates (Georgeou, 2012). This did not align with La Colombe's institutional accountability structure. This can interfere with Ebrahim's (2007) accountability model because volunteers may affect relationships between organisations. Chapter 9 explores this theme further.

The second pattern stems from Crossroads' rejection of linear conceptions of development, whilst simultaneously receiving most of its funding from the Canadian government to send Canadian volunteers abroad. This creates two strong accountability relationships first between Crossroads and the volunteers, as they are responsible for supporting volunteers, and second to GAC, to report on the outcomes of volunteering. These dominant accountability relationships may outweigh the mutual learning needs of partners, thus contradicting their development approach. The actors' beliefs that mutual learning enables them to balance multiple accountabilities implies that there are many layers of accountability that strive to reinforce each other.

The third pattern relates to the muted role of GAC in practice. In contrast to the DFID case, the GAC Officer viewed her role as monitoring progress according to the funding agreement. The Officer works on an individual basis with recipients. GAC's efforts to aggregate results have not affected the Officer's strategy to learn about programmatic outcomes, and she did not have a wider theory of change to report on as the GTF consultants did in the previous case. The Officer did not seem to be involved as much, perhaps due to the long-term nature of the relationship. However, underneath the surface, changing priorities, reporting requirements, and increasing uncertainty influences the funding relationship significantly.

The next two chapters examine the role of ICT in mediating these patterns of individual, institutional and relationship accountability properties. Chapter 8 focuses on the fundamental ICT inequalities that exist between the actors, which further entrenches the patterns identified above. Chapter 9 focuses on the instrumental role of volunteers, attempting to dismantle these patterns in disruptive ways through the use of ICT.

Chapter 8

THE PROBLEMATIC NATURE OF SEVERE ICT INEQUALITY IN DEVELOPMENT AID RELATIONSHIPS

ICT factors outlined in Section 2.6 significantly constrained learning and accountability to a far greater extent in the second case study than in the first. Hilbert (2014) argued that *universalisation* of ICT has occurred because almost 90% of the world's population have access to telecommunication. Thus, the digital divide has "outgrown the binary question about the 'haves' and the 'have nots' and has become a structural question about the 'have much' and 'have little'" (Hilbert, 2014, p.821). However, according to the ITU's ICT Development Index (2016) – an index which ranks countries based on national access, use and skills statistics – Togo ranks in the bottom 10% (159 out of 175). In Togo, most of the population does not have access to the Internet. In 2016, 7.12% of the population was using the Internet (global average 43.83 %) (ITU, 2016). Less than one out of 100 inhabitants had access to fixed (wired)-broadband, and 6.02% had access to mobile-broadband Internet (ITU, 2016). La Colombe faces considerable constraints to take advantage of ICTs for learning and accountability in this context.

The three approaches to ICT for organisational learning outlined in Sub-Section 2.5.2 do not adequately consider severely constrained ICT contexts like Togo. The functionalist and infrastructure approaches presume that an adequate threshold of ICT infrastructure – ICT skills, Internet, software and hardware – can be

harnessed (Surman and Reilly, 2003; Saeed, Rohde and Wulf, 2008; Waugaman, 2016). However, in Togo, developing this infrastructure from zero may be quite unrealistic when examining costs and benefits of appropriating specific functionalities and infrastructures.

The third approach, characterised by Wenger, White and Smith's (2009) conceptualisation of digital habitats, argued that configurations of features, tools, and platforms emerge through community dynamics. However, lack of ICT in Togo limits the chance that digital habitats will emerge through stewardship processes alone. Furthermore, all of the ICT approaches are incomplete, as they operate on universalist assumptions. It is not clear how resource-constrained organisations, and the donors supporting them, should make ICT choices when there is little existing scope or capacity to use it. In addition, the above perspectives downplay the role of organisational ideologies and interests, as well as the power and agency of actors.

Drawing on Korten (1987) and Balboa (2014), the problematic nature of ICT inequality can be addressed by considering the empowering potential of ICT. Both perspectives view organisational empowerment as the development of technical and strategic capacities at local and networked levels, whilst retaining responsiveness to local communities. However, these scholars do not adequately crystalise the fundamental importance of ICT needed to develop these organisational capacities. This chapter investigates ICTs within bridging processes across organisational capacities (technical, administrative and political) and contexts (local, national and international) (Balboa, 2014; see also Section 2.3). It argues that a bridging approach to ICT is potentially a more effective conceptual tool to work across contexts that are highly unequal.

This chapter has two primary aims:

- Hilbert's (2014) notion of ICT capacity gaps articulates dimensions of the digital divide – such as quality, quantity, and communication rates of ICT infrastructure. However, both functionalist and emergent ICT approaches view capacity gaps in systemic, technical ways that do not adequately address inequality across contexts. This chapter examines empirical evidence outlining capacity gaps faced by La Colombe, demonstrating the importance of understanding ICT inequality in contextualised ways.

- To explore bridging as a new approach to ICT that fundamentally treats interaction effects amongst accountability, learning, power and control over ICT contexts. I suggest that a new theoretical approach to ICT might help to address ICT inequality in a way that does not risk disempowering the agency and power of CSO and their beneficiaries. This approach positions ICTs as sources of organisational empowerment which enable integrative systems of knowing and doing.

To these ends, the chapter is organised into three sections which engage with the accountability and ICT contexts at organisational, national and macro levels. Each section outlines existing ICT capacity inequality, and the technical and contextual reasons for these inequalities. Insights from functionalist and emergent approaches are uncovered to explain the limited effect ICT is having in this case study.

8.1 Evaluating the contributions of ICT to La Colombe's capacity

La Colombe argues that it responds to the needs of its target populations, based on its relationships with beneficiaries built through face-to-face interactions (Chapter 7). The potential to engage with beneficiaries through the use of ICTs is almost non-existent in Vogan. A recent survey of 1500 Togolese in three urban centres found that 81% owned mobile phones, although 60% of these were basic phones, which offer significantly fewer functionalities (Breuer and Groshek, 2016). Furthermore, 84.7% of the respondents reported having less than two of the following skills: making calls, sending and receiving text messages, and searching for information on the Internet, using email, social networks or connecting the phone to WiFi (Breuer and Groshek, 2016). These statistics indicate that general urban populations have limited contact with ICT. These figures, then, do not apply to the country's most marginalised, such as the young female learners or rural community members that La Colombe supports.

The prefecture of Vo where the research took place, is composed of rural villages, and few community members had mobile phones. I did not observe a single female learner at the training centre (CAF) with her own mobile phone. Ex-learners involved in an entrepreneurial association that I met during a donor visit, were able to afford phones due to their business income. Not all business owners had phones, so they spoke about sharing them to purchase inputs for their hair styling and tailoring boutiques (Figure 8-1). The ex-learners were no longer a focus of La Colombe's programming, however, staff commitment beyond project deadlines to continue supporting this association demonstrates that La Colombe invests in relationships to maintain extensive knowledge and trust in the community.

Figure 8-1 Ex-learners discussing communal purchasing of goods for their businesses by sharing mobile phones

Source: photo credit La Colombe.

Figure 8-2 of the La Colombe case study shows the female learners and community members on the right-hand side who do not usually have access to ICTs. Thus, La Colombe staff must send letters or phone a contact person in the rural village where the learners or community members live. However, Jacques, Manager, told me that he frequently had to travel to different areas of the prefecture to follow-up with certain female learners, and to ensure that letters and communications had reached their target populations. In comparison to Figure 6-1 at Gender Links, there are significantly fewer ICT channels regularly used in this case, and no interaction with beneficiaries through ICT.

Figure 8-2. ICT channels of the La Colombe case study
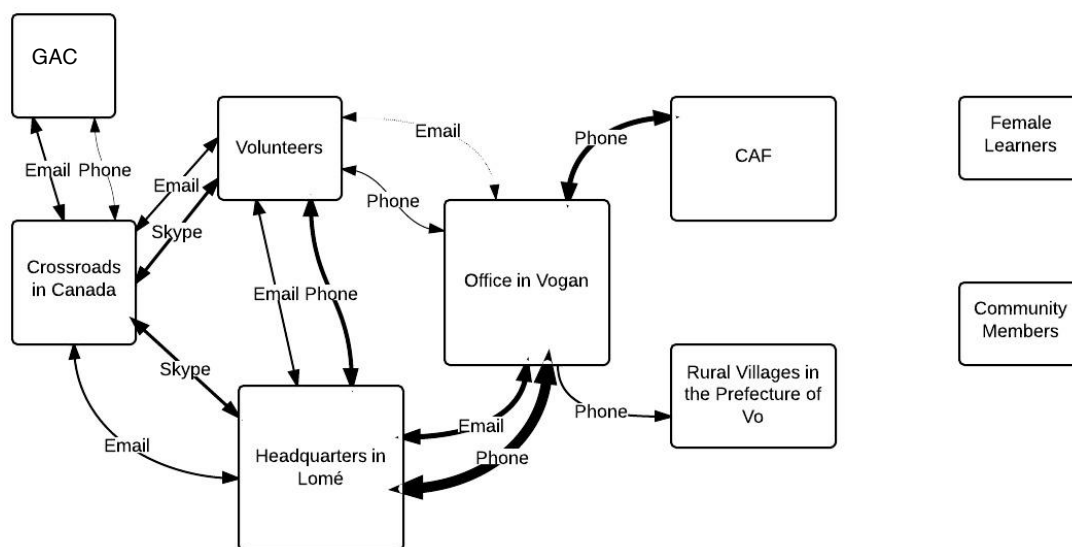
Source: Author.

La Colombe's administrative weaknesses are integrally linked to ICT capacity in Vogan. A lack of stable income for qualified full-time staff and dependence on PROVONAT and international volunteers were the main reasons the Director gave for needing to thoroughly coordinate all activities. Mobile phones were most commonly used to coordinate activities amongst staff, followed by email to transfer plans and reports to headquarters. Staff relayed information back over the phone and did not develop systematic procedures to maintain records, archives of documents, project information and results.

Additionally, Vogan suffered daily from a lack of reliable electricity. The CAF was not equipped with an electrical supply at all, and although there were plans to extend electricity to the CAF's location, no timeline had been determined. In the office, and at the Director's home across the street, electricity went out for long periods of time daily. Frequently, I managed to work from my laptop until electricity returned. The office was only equipped with PCs, so staff would switch to other

activities that did not require ICT when this happened. Staff were accustomed to this pattern of power failure, and did not have any means to adapt as I did.

Hardware in the Pedakondji office was also problematic. There were four desktop computers, which ran Windows XP, the last version of which was released in 2008, and extended support ended in 2014 (Microsoft, 2016). I learnt that these computers were using pirated licenses because I was told not to use one because it had a virus that they could not fix. I asked the secretary how long it will be before they are able to fix it, and she replied that they do not have *"the thing that makes it run"* referring to the operating system. This automatically excludes La Colombe from receiving philanthropic software donations from Microsoft, as Gender Links did (Section 6.3), because the latest version of their software requires better hardware and a newer operating system.

When staff are not in the habit of using computers for administrative purposes, they do not gain the skills needed to use ICT to develop their technical capacities. There were clear technical capacity gaps in the drip irrigation project that were worsened by Koffi's, a PROVONAT, dubious knowledge of the strategic purpose of the project, and his lack of initiative to influence the technical direction of the project due to the organisational culture. He was never provided with the documentation or asked to contribute to these materials. The ICT context contributed to this lack of integration because it was inconvenient for him to travel to the office to use a computer. Furthermore, whilst all staff that I interviewed reported feeling confident in their abilities to use and experiment with ICT, the few times that I observed staff using the computers, I noticed most of them searching for keys whilst typing, failing to locate stored files, and having difficulty troubleshooting simple technical problems. Consequently, the integration of local and expert knowledge is centralised at headquarters.

In comparison, staff and PROVONAT at headquarters did not have similar ICT problems. Staff there, such as the consultant who helped periodically to write reports, and a Canadian volunteer who was doing ICT training (Section 9.2), all required access to the Internet. I expected that having an office in Lomé and one in Vogan was convenient because of the constrained ICT context in the rural area, and perhaps due to the potential to network with donors in Lomé. However, when I asked the Director why there were two offices during an interview, after my observations in both locations, I received a different response:

> *The office in Lomé is a headquarters. Headquarters is the house of the organisation itself. It's La Colombe who is small [in Vogan]… We have a lot of action, it's closer to the beneficiaries. That is why we opened an antenna there. We are going to open another antenna before the end of the year.* [15]

Still convinced that she had misunderstood me, and that I would receive an answer related to donors and communications infrastructures, I asked again why it was necessary to have headquarters in Lomé. She replied:

> *Well, first we have many members of the administration council who are, they are all in Lomé. So, in relation to efficiency, the location of headquarters is in Lomé. At the general assembly, [the direction] will be in Lomé but we can move it. At the moment, [no need to travel] because the members are in Lomé. We only have one or two who are in the middle of the country. That is why headquarters is in Lomé since its creation in 1990.* [16]

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[15] Le bureau à Lomé c'est une siège. Le siège c'est la maison même de l'organisation. C'est La Colombe qui est petite labas, et puis c'est le... on a beaucoup d'action... c'est plus proches aux bénéficiaires. C'est pourquoi on a ouvert un antenne labas. Nous allons ouvrir (un autre) l'antenne avant la fin de cet année

[16] Bon, d'abord on a beaucoup des membres du conseil d'administration qui sont, elles sont toutes à Lomé. Donc pour des questions d'efficacité il faut que à la création de le siège, c'est à Lomé. À l'assemblé générale, le siège va être à Lomé mais on peut le déplacer. Pour le moment, ne pas déplacer

Whilst I did not expect this answer, I had learned that the organisation was run in a top-down manner (Sub-Section 7.4.3). Her response indicated that there were other, more substantial, institutional reasons for separating tasks between offices other than the ICT infrastructure alone. To clarify, I asked how often the Council meets, wondering whether there were significant cost and efficiency savings, as she implied. She replied:

> *Four times a year. But when we have questions, timely, or ones that you need an answer pretty quickly, we contact them and then we discuss. No quick decisions without… And when there are technical decisions, I make those with the employees. But when it's strategic, the council has to be there.[17]*

Her response that she needs to speak to the Administration Council quickly to make decisions together does not explain if or why this can be done over the telephone. Whether this is a cultural reason or cost and efficiency saving was not clear.

Overall, this sub-section has highlighted how ICT factors structure and handicap organisational operations of La Colombe. In this case, basic access to technology is the chief concern rather than effective use, or relevance of ICT strategies. La Colombe has virtually no options to engage beneficiaries through ICTs. Organisational ICT infrastructure such as their hardware and software were out of date and not amenable to adapting to the daily power cuts. These technical issues outline the practical reasons why the organisation has divided tasks between the rural and urban offices to reflect access and use constraints. Essentially, ICT has

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tout simplement parce que tout les membres sont à Lomé. On a que une ou deux qui sont à l'intérieur du pays. C'est pourquoi le siège est à Lomé depuis la création en 1990.

[17] Quatre fois dans l'année. Mais quand on a des questions, pressés, ou quels que tu veux une réponse assez rapidement, on les convoques puis on discute. Aucun décision rapide sans (...) et puis quand il y a des décision à d'ordre technique, moi je les prends avec les employés. Mais quand c'est stratégique là, il faut que le conseil soit là.

contributed to the separation between where development practice takes place, and reporting practices to fulfil relationship accountability demands. This demonstrates that even at the local level, ICT inequality negatively contributes to bridging capacity across organisational capacities because the place where La Colombe's political capacity is developed is separated from where its administrative and technical capacities are generated.

However, it is necessary to acknowledge that this separation is not primarily caused by ICT. The Director took little interest in using ICT for much else than calling her employees. To fulfil my offer of 20 hours of service each week, I made suggestions regarding how ICT could contribute the few times we spoke, in addition to advocating for the action research component of my study (see Section 3.1). However, I was asked only to produce a short report on SMS messaging platforms to send information to beneficiaries. In contrast to Gender Links, management did not typically view ICT as a means to decentralise operations, to confront learning challenges, or to grow their organisation in a similar manner. Nevertheless, technical reasons provide an outlet for the Director to justify maintaining complete oversight over operations because of the administrative and technical capacity weaknesses in Vogan.

8.2   The Internet was not created equally

The state of the Internet in Togo requires its own section because this national infrastructure imposes limits on how La Colombe can grow its capacities. The Internet in Togo, however, cannot be understood simply by examining the cost and bandwidth of connectivity alone. In Togo, the government plays the primary role in setting Internet conditions and controls the main Internet service providers (Bernstein and Goodman, 2005). The government implemented new Internet initiatives from 2010, offering greater Internet access options at more affordable rates than in the past, but

costs, quality, reliability and access in real terms have not improved. I began researching the Togolese connectivity context whilst working for Crossroads from 2007-2010 (Bentley, 2009). Here, I compare my initial research from this period with an updated view after fieldwork in the capital city as well as in the prefecture of Vo in 2013. The evolving national Internet context provides the context for a rather immutable force that donors and CSOs are not likely to be able to improve.

In 2007, one of my responsibilities was to manage volunteers to research and connect Crossroads' West African partners to the Internet as part of an inter-organisational collaboration initiative (Bentley, 2009). La Colombe was not a partner at the time. We learned that bandwidth speed did not adequately predict connection quality. As illustrated in Table 8-1, Mali and Niger CSOs had lower bandwidth than Ghana and Senegal CSOs, but people there expressed greater satisfaction due to reliability and quality of connections. Initially Crossroads aimed to support each partner to acquire an Internet connection capable of supporting voice over IP technology, and our benchmark centred on gaining upload rates of at least 128 kilobits per second (kbps) due to recommendations provided by a software company specialising in low-connectivity contexts (Bentley, 2009). Togo was by far the most difficult context because the only affordable option was a 128/64 kbps ADSL connection, which had a monthly cost of 45 000 FCFA (£ 50) in 2008 (Table 8-1). This did not meet Crossroad's benchmark, but the directors of the partner CSOs chose the sustainable cost option. After a year of operation across two partner CSOs, both partners cancelled their connections after paying substantially for Internet, and receiving unreliable service. The CSO partners reported months of blackout coverage, and received no response from customer service to fix problems after repeatedly spending time to call service providers and log their issues.

Table 8-1 Regional comparison of Internet cost and reliability for CSOs in 2008

Country	Type of connection	Monthly Cost	Reported reliability by CSOs
Ghana	- ADSL is predominant in Ghana and is available up to 1Mb - Wimax is much more expensive and offers slower connection speeds, which is not favoured by partners.	*512K/128K ADSL* **£ 33** *1Mb/256K ADSL* **£ 100**	- Severe ADSL reliability issues. In areas of Accra where the telecommunications infrastructure is new and being developed, resolving issues take significant time. - Extensive power outages for one partner.
Mali	- ADSL and WImax are both practical options in Bamako. - Options are limited in Bandiagara	*512K ADSL* **£ 89** *384K/384K Wimax* **£ 33**	- Significant increase in reliability following switch to Wimax connections.
Niger	- ADSL, up to 1Mb, and Wimax are available in Niger.	*512K ADSL* **£ 77** *512K/512K Wimax* **£ 332**	- Switch from 512K ADSL down to 144K shared (by 3 partners) Wimax connection increased reliability significantly. - Partners felt the ADSL company failed to replace faulty hardware, and did not trust customer service.
Senegal	- ADSL is predominant in Senegal, and is available up to 10Mb/512K	*512K/128K ADSL* **£ 21** *1Mb/256K ADSL* **£ 28**	- Extensive power outages for all partners. - Varying connection quality, but not clear why.
Togo	- ADSL and wireless available up to 2Mb/256K	*512K/128K* **£ 200** ADSL **£ 357** wireless *256K/64K* **£ 77** ADSL **£ 279** wireless *128K/64K* **£ 50** ADSL **£ 169** wireless	- Complete outage for more than a month for both partners, customer service was not willing to fix the problem or reimburse the monthly costs. - Partners unable to afford switch to private service due to costs.

Source: Bentley (2008b), costs converted from 2008 CAD to 2008 GBP (0.5125).

By 2013, Internet services had changed in Togo. The standard ADSL connection was augmented to 256 KBPS/ 128KBPS and the monthly cost fell to 22 295 FCFA (£ 26) (Togo Telecom, 2017). In 2012, a new dongle-based Internet service was introduced, which offered an alternative to ADSL by transmitting Internet via wireless infrastructure rather than telephone cables. This *Nomad* service is much less expensive than the ADSL connections (15 000 F CFA or £ 18 for monthly unlimited). A third generation (3G) mobile Internet connection was also available at a comparable rate. On the surface, these cost and infrastructure changes may indicate improvements in the connectivity context. However, there were still significant problems.

Obtaining access to the Internet in Togo is prohibitive, even for people like myself who have considerable privilege in comparison to the average citizen. I was advised by La Colombe's accountant to sort out my Internet connection before going to Vogan, as the offices to obtain Internet connectivity are available only in Lomé. Figure 8-2 offers a comical insight into the problems I faced to obtain a connection, illustrating how the procedure is quite difficult and lengthy to complete. This contrasted greatly with South Africa and Mozambique, where my mobile phone connections were configured within minutes at kiosks simply by presenting identification and paying a small set-up fee. Mobile Internet is managed differently from voice by Togocell, and it is not possible to purchase vouchers from street vendors to pay for Internet as you go. I had to pay a lump sum for the month up front. When I refer to "yovo" in Figure 8-3, this word is used by Togolese to identify foreigners. My use of this term indicates that I often felt confused because I was foreign and did not intuitively understand rules and procedures. However, I later understood that the long lines at the office were to register basic SIM cards. I thought I was permitted to enter ahead of others waiting outside because I was a "yovo" but, in fact, there were no other customers waiting to purchase the 3G service, probably because of the prohibitive lump sum costs.

Figure 8-3 Venting on Facebook about obtaining a 3G Internet Connection in Togo
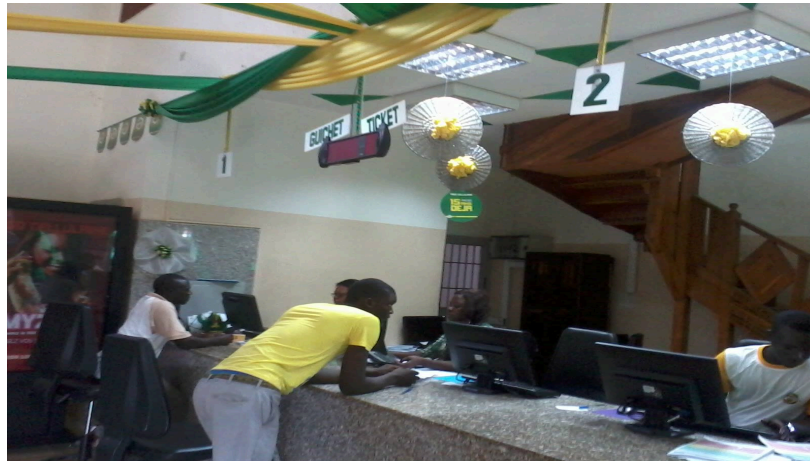
Togocell celebrates 15 years 😊 :) Here is my nofail procedure to get your own super fantastic 3G connection!

1) Get a sim from some guy off the street and pop it in your phone. But then of course, this is yovo price and whilst I'm still not sure what the real price of the sim is, other yovos tell me it can be more and I didn't get 'too ripped off' whilst Togolese tell me I paid about 10 pounds too much. Who knows..
2) Actually number 1 doesn't work. You have to register in person anyway.
3) Take your sim card to the siège and wait in line outside in midday heat for a long time. Wait until the line advances enough so that you can actually read the sign on the door that says that you need a photocopy of your ID.
4) Go find a photocopier. Traipse into some random guy's house because that is what crazy yovos are told to do, and instead get some water from the nice man. Thanks man! Then head to the actual photocopier machine guy.
5) So 4 doesn't work either, cause the photocopier guy is on lunch break. Go have a coke and wait some more and worry a bit that you're drinking too much liquid with no toilets in sight and not sure how much waiting is left, but damned if you give up now.
6) Get your photocopy and head back to the long line.
7) Wait until they open the door, shouting out a question into the crowd. It doesn't matter what the question is, the answer is yes, and it's your turn.
8) Oh good, they let you inside, look at the pathetic yovo, so lost, even if she didn't understand the damn question let her stay.. Thanks guys!
9) Take whatever they offer you. Yovoooo!!!
10) Actually, you need money for number 9
11) Walk 1km to the nearest [bank machine], wait in line some more, and pray that your card works today.
12) Walk 1km back, and when you return and squeeze through the giant line of people out front pissing them all off, just remember that soon, you will have Internet.
13) Now, just a few dozen forms, shuffle here, shuffle there, compliments to the genius ladies that configure your phone, and ta da!!! Joie de vivre!
Total time: 4 hrs.

Source: Author (Posted on Facebook on October 3, 2013).

The bandwidth of the ADSL and wireless dongle-based services are similar, but advertised speeds were not an adequate predictor of the services received, especially in Vogan. Network outages were a consistent problem in Vogan on both my 3G connection and the Nomad service. Due to these outages, I observed employees at La Colombe travelling 5km by motorcycle or by foot to the nearest Internet cafe on two occasions within a month to send off important documents to the Director in Lomé.

The situation was not much better when Internet was available in the Vogan office as employees were required to take turns using a single dongle Internet 'key' and this caused a great deal of frustration and disruption to their working patterns:

There is access to Internet here. I would like to have enough access to Internet. Like, each person should have their own key to work freely. Because the time that you wait for the other to finish, you're no longer… (Edouard, PROVONAT)*.*

You need information now, but when you get here, there is only the one key there. The only key for Internet and communication. So when you come and your colleague is using it, you have to wait (Jacques, manager)*.*

We need access to Internet. I have to come to the office, notably for research, and it's not always easy to come to the office. Because I have to free myself from the fields, and like you see that I am here, there… When I am free and when I come, you have to see if your colleagues are working with the key or not (Koffi, PROVONAT)*.*

These quotations describe that staff in Vogan cannot all use the Internet at the same time. Having only one Internet access point instead of an organisational network

hinders their working patterns, especially when they all travel between the CAF and the office to accomplish specific tasks. La Colombe had difficulty meeting their commitments to staff financially, so obtaining multiple keys or installing a network was not a priority.

Furthermore, obtaining more keys is unhelpful in resolving daily network outages. Although I could not confirm the reasons for outages, Atxutegi (2016) offers a technical explanation. In simple terms, connecting a dongle or mobile phone to wireless providers uses an initial test to determine the potential quality. If the chipset of the mobile device is poor quality, the provider establishes a connection at a low speed regardless of network capacity. Wireless providers also use a finite number of *resource blocks*. These blocks distribute Internet across the users and locations. Location spread and simultaneous use also affect quality and strong winds or storms can also disrupt wireless connections. Moreover, Heimerl *et al.* (2013) suggest that rural wireless base stations require substantial amounts of power that rural communities do not have, thus power is preserved by shutting down Internet. In sum, barriers to entry, connectivity devices and hardware, service reliability and networking potential – in addition to speed and cost of Internet access – are all needed to understand CSO connectivity in this case.

However, Togolese CSOs face a greater non-technical challenge to improve connectivity. A representation of the connectivity context in technical terms fails to acknowledge the extent that the Internet is but another perceptible means through which the government asserts its power and control in Togo. I was not able to obtain information from customer services or the Togolese government to confirm why it remains so difficult to gain access to a reliable connection in Togo. I draw this conclusion because of this lack of transparency and my experience in supporting CSOs to gain access to Internet within the region since 2007.

Relating to development aid relationships specifically, Ferguson (1997) suggested that powerful actors rearrange reality to ignore political aspects of development whilst reifying others key to their own agendas. Representing Internet connectivity in terms of bandwidth speed and cost fits this pattern. Several explanations for why Internet connectivity is technically unreliable in Togo have been outlined above. Amidst such opacity, GAC, Crossroads and La Colombe may ignore the political nature of Internet reality as a means of rearranging it. There is limited evidence that Internet connectivity is a function of technical or resource limitations because CSOs that pay for services are not guaranteed reliable service quality, and they are not offered adequate customer services to troubleshoot and fix their connectivity issues. A technical view of Internet connectivity denies the limited power and control of CSOs to improve their connectivity in Togo. Such a view also misleads donors to encourage CSOs to grow their administrative and technical capacities, because they can influence these aspects of organisational work. Improved administrative and technical capacities enables donors to justify granting organisations greater funding to pay for better Internet. However, this logic fails in Togo.

8.3 Traditional development aid roles and ICT inequality

Chapter 7 explored Crossroads' position between GAC, as their main funder, and their CSO recipient partners, namely La Colombe. Whilst both Crossroads and GAC reported undergoing significant programmatic and operational change in recent years, these changes have not treated what Barry-Shaw and Jay (2012, p.12) call "political blindness" within reporting practices. Moreover, results-based managerial frameworks adopted by GAC and Crossroads do not establish a clear outline for how ICTs should be used to collect and analyse information by CSOs and their partners (Meier, 2003).

Whilst these frameworks often benefit from ICTs in their implementation, they do not elaborate specifically on how organisations should use ICTs for these purposes. This sub-section identifies schisms that divide the organisational information sharing systems between GAC, Crossroads and their partners. These schisms reflect the traditional roles the actors appropriated. Ultimately, these roles must be transformed to enable greater mutual learning (Sub-Section 7.4.2). Reducing ICT inequality between the actors is critical to bridge these divides.

Central to this analysis is that Crossroads is subject to the demands of GAC (Barry-Shaw and Jay, 2012; Cliche, 2014). When discussing Crossroads reporting responsibilities, Claire, a Crossroads team leader spoke about changes to their requirements:

We have a weakness in terms of monitoring and evaluation, we are more at the level of… We are looking more to have results of impact, through exchange. But at the same time our programme was constructed around capacity building… That was a difficult change that was made by [GAC] along the way. They asked us to report on development results. So, we had to change our planning, change the results, the monitoring and evaluation system follows, so we do not have the same capacity to report on impact. [18]

When GAC's priorities changed, Crossroads had to reconceptualise its initial programming. She did not find the shift in focus from reporting on output to impact results problematic, but it did not seem that she found the changes advantageous.

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[18] En fait, il y a une faiblesse au niveau de suivi évaluation, on est plus au niveau de… on cherche plus à avoir des résultats d'impact, d'échange. Mais au même temps notre programme est construit au tour du rendement du capacité, donc c'est... ça c'est un changement difficile qui a été fait par l'ACDI, ex ACDI en cours de route. Parce que notre programme de 5 ans était un programme de renforcement du capacité. Mais en cours de route ils nous a demandé de reporter sous les résultats de développement. Donc, donc il faut changer de la planification, changer les résultats, le système de suivi évaluation suivre, donc on n'a pas la même facilité à rapporter sur l'impact.

Regardless, GAC sets the stage for the content of the reports, but does not place conditions on how this content should be constructed.

As such, Crossroads has maintained its traditional methods to collaborate with its partners to gain feedback when programmatic changes are required. These negotiations are done often in person or over Skype:

We developed a logical framework that we re-proposed to our partners when we went in January on field visits. So, the partners are always in the process with us for reflecting alongside us and to give their comments, to say if they are OK or not, and to see if they identify within what we are proposing to them. Because for sure it's us who writes the logical framework, so the words used will be very Canadian when we present it to our partners, but they will react and tell us if it speaks to them or not. These are our strengths (Claire, team leader)*.* [19]

Claire views the way that Crossroads involves the partners in programme revisions as a strength because they provide a forum to enable responsiveness towards them. She finds that holding discussions in person allows the partners to voice their needs and concerns. However, it is usually only the directors who are involved in these meetings. Nevertheless, Crossroads staff maintain a role to construct and revise their programme reports, and they feel this is adequate to achieve responsiveness. However, most of the time partners are not responsible for contributing directly to these documents, which creates a divide in organisational learning and reporting processes.

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[19] Là on a développer un modèle logique qu'on a reproposé à nos partenaires quand on était allé au mois de janvier dans les visites terrain. Donc les partenaires sont toujours dans les processus avec nous pour réfléchir avec nous et pour donner les commentaires, dire s'ils sont d'accord ou pas puis de voir de regarder s'ils se reconnaissent dans ce qu'on leur propose. Parce que c'est sûr que c'est nous qui écrivons le modèle logique donc les mots utilisés vont être très canadiens quand on le présent à nos partenaires mais ils vont réagir ou si est-ce que ça leur parle ou pas. Ce sont des forces.

This schism between reporting procedures and learning from partners was also recognised by the Crossroads' GAC officer:

So, in the field. What comes out isn't necessarily always in the reports, but I know that in the field they do good work. When I meet them and they bring their local partner, and we can have a really good idea of what they actually do in reality… I am convinced that… In the field, I have no problem. But it's the way that they… Sometimes that I don't know if it goes according to the reports. It's a bit like papers, but, but it gets better. [20]

This last quotation shows how the Officer rationalises the schism between the interpretive/practice-based knowledge sharing, and the technical/managerial reports. On the one hand, she values learning from the partners in person, and she trusts the relationships Crossroads has with its partners. On the other hand, she notes that she is sceptical of the accuracy of reports, and acknowledges that they are working to improve them. She does not consider integrating these learning strategies to connect her experience learning directly from the partners to their reporting procedures.

As Wallace (1997) argued, donors recognise the power that they hold within development aid relationships, but they often try to minimise the issue rather than reducing these inequalities. Crossroads avoids imposing *Canadian* managerial procedures onto their partners, but this strategy negates the need for partners to develop the administrative capacities to contribute cross-culturally. Both interviewees also believed that the partners were not able really to contribute, which was not entirely true. At La Colombe, the CAF was funded by a German CSO, and although the Director did not choose to share their reporting procedures and documents with

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[20] Bon sur le terrain. Ce qui sort c'est pas nécessairement toujours dans les rapports, mais je sais que sur le terrain ils font du bon travail. Quand je rencontre quand ils viennent avec leurs partenaires locaux, puis qu'on puisse vraiment avoir une bonne idée de ce qu'ils font réellment. Je suis convaincu que… sur le terrain, j'ai aucun problème. Mais c'est la façon de faire (…) des fois qui fait que je sais pas si ça passe autant les rapports. C'est un peu comme les papiers mais, mais ça s'améliore.

me, the Director and her staff stated having experience in results-based managerial practice due to this experience. Claire did not know about La Colombe specifically, but said that the partners in general:

> *They have other funders, but I do not know just to what point they are well equipped to do it. To do this kind of project monitoring… We accompany [our partners]. When we work with cooperatives for example, who produce shea butter, like in Niger for example, who have been working since 2007. It's a cooperative that has progressed very very fast in their activities, mastering the production… But impact, we do not have…[21]*

At this stage, Claire believed that most partners were not able to contribute to the required M&E systems on their own. She saw it as a mutual endeavour to begin developing such systems together, but in a manner that maintains their existing roles.

However, based on my fieldwork in Togo, I identified a need to challenge these roles. As highlighted in Sub-Section 7.4.3, I observed donor visits within which contradictory results were given to different donors to present La Colombe in a positive light. Selectively sharing information, as Ebrahim (2003c) has argued, is a common tendency for CSOs to maintain control. However, upon discussing my observations with both Crossroads and GAC interviewees, they were aware of the information disclosure problems. Both reflected that they would address these problems in time, but they did not have a larger plan to resolve these issues. As Vacarro and Madsen (2009) remark, information disclosure to financial stakeholders is a precarious matter, but there is no denying that ICTs have transformed how organisations can theoretically share information with all stakeholders. Whilst ICTs do

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[21] Ils ont d'autres bailleurs de fonds mais je sais pas jusqu'à quel point ils sont bien outillé à faire. À faire se genre de suivi de projet… Nous on accompagne. Quand on travail avec des coopératives par exemple, puis, qui produisent du karité, cel au Niger par exemple, qui travail depuis 2007. C'est un coopératif qui a progressé très très vite dans ces activités de la maitrise de la production de… Mais l'impact on n'a pas de...

offer great potential, there is a much stronger historical influence to enact traditional relations that have evolved between GAC, the volunteer cooperation agencies and their partners. These roles inhibit the actors from exploring ICT for these purposes.

8.4 Conclusion: a bridging approach to ICT

This chapter explored the significance of recent ICT infrastructure improvements in Togo, and the extent to which they may have translated into positive gains for a small CSO and their beneficiaries. I initially posited that ICT deficits are root causes of learning and accountability problems. However, upon closer examination of the ICT factors (Section 2.6), my research demonstrated that for every technical explanation, there were other contextual determinants of ICT inequalities. ICT deficiencies in Togo reflect institutionalised blindness that inhibits insight into the potential of ICT for transformational purposes. Consequently, the actors involved did not exhibit a sense of injustice, or a drive to change policy or practice to address ICT capacity gaps.

In summary, the determinants of ICT inequality in this case were:

- *Organisational determinants.* ICT reliant tasks, such as report and proposal writing, were delegated to headquarters staff. The satellite office and CAF training centre lacked reliable electricity, equipment and Internet. However, the Director views the role of headquarters to direct operations, and preferred to receive information mostly over the telephone upon request. She did not view the technical infrastructure as a main hindrance to their operations.

- *National ICT infrastructure determinants.* Cost is a primary benchmark used to assess Internet accessibility by the Alliance for Affordable Internet (2016). Geography, service reliability, barriers to register connections, the type of service, and capacity to network also significantly affected accessibility for

CSOs in Togo. However, CSOs have little power or control to resolve service-related issues, and are subject to the Internet conditions afforded by the Togolese government.

- *Development aid relationship determinants.* Relationship accountability properties between GAC and Crossroads have been relatively stable over time. Crossroads has traditionally been responsible for reporting on programme outcomes, and have maintained responsibility to construct technical/managerial reports. Whilst partners collaborate through more interpretive/practice-based means, they have not been required to develop ICT capacity to contribute more substantially.

These determinants indicate significant risks for ICT intervention, from either a functionalist or emergent ICT perspective. A functionalist approach would impel stakeholders to examine the risks and benefits of applying ICTs to meet certain objectives (Waugaman, 2016). Risks typically outnumbered benefits across all levels of activity in this case. In contrast, the constrained ICT context exponentially impairs the potential for socially-embedded practices to emerge. Day and Greenwood (2009, p.345) have argued that "ICT development, particularly in rural areas, is more about relationship building within communities than about technology. Much of the innovation that is needed can be more accurately described as social innovation rather than as technical innovation." Influencing the ICT context is incredibly resource-intensive and difficult, especially in rural areas. These aspects indicate a need to rationalise reducing ICT inequality as a fundamental, rather than an instrumental concern.

The challenge has been to address the structural character of ICT inequality, especially in the context of asymmetrical power relations in development aid relationships (Wallace, 1999; Barry-Shaw and Jay, 2012; Banks, Hulme and

Edwards, 2015). ICT inequalities reinforce clear differences between the actors, and are associated with disjunctures between the approaches that Crossroads and La Colombe enact independently. However, when focusing on differences, it is tempting to encourage local CSOs to gain the ICT capacities that they lack in comparison. This implies a normative goal for organisations to adopt a whole package of ICT to collect, analyse, construct and transmit information as mirrored by their international counterparts. Although there is a general scarcity in research which seeks to understand how local CSOs cope with growing dominant managerialist reporting demands in limited ICT contexts, my first case study outlines this trajectory. A main preoccupation in the first case was the lack of attention to the ICT participation context (Chapter 6), such that ICT inequalities between the organisation and beneficiaries were exacerbated. This reduced Gender Links' political capacity at the local level in favour of increasing their political capacity at the global level, as Balboa (2014) warns.

In contrast, Crossroads exhibits an opposite tendency, by actively seeking to reduce the burden of the Canadian technical/managerial system of knowing and doing on their partners. Despite the pressures inflicted by GAC to change and improve Crossroads' M&E systems holistically, Crossroads chooses to "accompany" their partners because Crossroads defines their shared frame of reference as one focused on the local context. Hence, they emphasise a situated perspective. Although a situated learning approach accommodates Powell's (2006) suggestion to give greater attention to knowledge production in the south, my research identified numerous reasons to question how this situated perspective is currently constructed and shared with Crossroads at a distance. A purely situated approach does not address ICT inequality between organisations and their beneficiaries either.

Conceptualising development aid relationships as an integrated whole offers a way forward. Balboa's (2014) bridging leadership capacities outline analytic terms

that are helpful to understand bridging across local and global contexts. These are: 1) In-depth inter-cultural and cross-cultural understanding; 2) commitment and discipline to act as an intermediary; and 3) enough power in the organisation to influence how work is done. These terms avoid tightly-structured thinking around dominant applications of ICT to development learning in favour of adapted approaches reflective of the local context. Bridging implies that local organisational capacities are contingent on networked collaboration, and that global capacities are contingent on local political capacities. These contingencies mean that addressing problems of organisational hierarchy, ICT access and transparency are central to bridging. However, as Balboa (2014) remarks, bridging leadership capacity fails to account for the dynamics involved in realising this conceptual shift. In order to investigate a bridging approach to ICT further, a more in-depth analysis of power dynamics across the case study is needed. The next chapter explores volunteers and ICT as key disruptors instrumental to bridging processes.

Chapter 9

The instrumental role of volunteers in shaping ICT for learning and accountability

The instrumental uses of ICT in this case were significantly fewer than those encountered in the first case study. Yet, ICT is essential to the operational management of La Colombe, and to the development aid relationship between La Colombe, Crossroads and GAC. Chapter 8 also explored how La Colombe did not deliberately aim to take advantage of ICT for learning from beneficiaries, to learn about organisational practice, or for structural integration. Nevertheless, between 2011 and 2016, two of the 28 Canadian volunteers sent to La Colombe were sent specifically to fulfil ICT mandates, one to develop a website in 2013 (Section 9.2), and another to create a database archive in 2016. Another five mandates involved ICT intensively, as in the organisational diagnostic (Section 9.1), fundraising, marketing, accounting, and monitoring and evaluation mandates. Volunteers are meant to influence local organisational practice (Georgeou, 2012; Schech, Mundkur and Skelton, 2015), thus they represent a key group of actors positioned to influence La Colombe's instrumental use of ICT for learning and accountability.

However, volunteers enter into a complex web of accountability relationships, which creates two important distinctions unique to this case. The first distinction is that both La Colombe staff and Canadian volunteers are considered beneficiaries of Crossroads and GAC's volunteer cooperation programme. Crossroads' primary beneficiary is La Colombe, but it is also accountable to the volunteers. Gender Links'

accountability relationships included numerous levels and groups of beneficiaries, yet there was always a clear distinction between internal and external actors. In this case, volunteers straddle positions within both Crossroads and La Colombe, and do not experience the organisational hierarchy in the same way as local staff. Moreover, Crossroads' development model centres on local organisational capacity building facilitated by volunteers (Sub-Section 7.4.2). Hence, the second distinction is that this case focuses on ICT within the international cooperation context rather than La Colombe's local development practice specifically. Thus, the instrumental uses of ICT are examined according to how and why learning and accountability unfold between Crossroads, volunteers and La Colombe staff. The chapter also examines how ICT contributes to understanding cooperation practice, and to learning as structural integration for both Crossroads and La Colombe.

Additionally, it is common for volunteers to struggle to adapt to foreign cultures, and to have difficulty establishing trusting relationships with local actors (Tiessen and Heron, 2012; Devereux, 2008). The contributions of ICT in this context, must therefore be situated both to the volunteers' adaptation process and to their cooperation practice. This chapter therefore also considers volunteers' use of ICT to adapt and carry out their mandates. This provides a key way to understand the power dynamics that unfold in learning and accountability processes.

This chapter has two main aims:

- First, it investigates the contributions of ICT to structural integration through volunteering. The relevance of Balboa (2014), Ebrahim (2007), Bovens (1998), and Chambers' (1997) work is considered, to explore the volunteers' attempts to integrate learning into organisational practice. These scholars take opposing views on structural integration, so this chapter compares their

perspectives to examine the interplay between ICT, volunteer capacity building, and structural integration drawing on this particular case study.

- Second, it builds an alternative view of the role of technology in relationships between development aid actors. Previous research has tended to view the transformative qualities of ICT as constructive and positive (Thompson, 2008; Wenger, White and Smith, 2009; Sadowsky, 2012). My research showed that volunteers used ICT primarily to learn independently, and to disrupt the accountability context. These instrumental uses of ICT were therefore not always positive or empowering.

Due to this chapter's concentration on the role of volunteers, the sections focus on all three Canadian volunteers in this case study. My own observations of ICT practice, and interviews with La Colombe staff are used to triangulate their views. As individuals, the volunteers had different backgrounds and mandates, yet each section demonstrates that the volunteers had tendencies to confront obstacles in a similar fashion, enabled by ICT. The tendencies and similarities across volunteers are consolidated to inform our understanding of ICT in the conclusion.

9.1   Documenting organisational practice

At the start of a new partnership, Crossroads habitually sends a volunteer to do an *organisational diagnostic.* The diagnostic is an evaluation process to determine the organisation's mission and objectives, and to analyse progress towards these objectives. ICT is instrumentally important because the process is conducted in Togo and transmitted to Canada, seeking to establish a mutual understanding of capacity-building needs between La Colombe and Crossroads. The diagnostic helps Crossroads to plan future volunteer mandates, and to look for a pertinent Canadian CSO for the tripartite partnership (Section 7.3). Sending a volunteer is also meant to

build trust, and to enable holistic and interpretive/practice-based understandings of practice and social norms through immersion and participatory methods (Chambers, 1997; Georgeou, 2012). In contrast to Gender Links, there were no explicit roles of ICT identified within the diagnostic process. For Gender Links, the Results for Change framework positions ICT as beneficial, and ICT is viewed to increase organisational impact through learning (Sub-Section 4.4.1). In contrast, for the La Colombe-Crossroads case, ICT was often seen as supporting existing practices. ICT was not intended to improve learning. This enabled contradictory meanings of ICT in the diagnostic process to take root. This sub-section discusses the different roles and meanings that ICT acquired through the diagnostic process by exploring a volunteer, Nissa's experience.

Additionally, initial ideas about the diagnostic process were framed by the volunteering rhetoric. Presumably, volunteers successfully integrate into local organisations and contribute positively. This framing was an important factor in shaping expectations for ICT in this context. The implicit role of ICT to support the volunteering dynamic is also limited by Togo's constrained ICT environment (Chapter 8). However, in line with three of Ebrahim's (2007) propositions regarding organisational learning, there was potential for ICTs to facilitate in three ways: 1) the diagnostic focused on accountability to La Colombe's mission, rather than to Crossroads' needs, this provides flexibility to use ICT appropriately; 2) it intended to strengthen feedback loops between La Colombe's beneficiaries, La Colombe and Crossroads, such that ICTs could support this feedback; 3) it minimised the threat of sanctions, and focused instead on emphasising collaboration opportunities, which emphasises using ICT for organisational empowerment.

When I met the diagnostic volunteer, Nissa, she had passed the midpoint of her mandate in October, 2013, but was not well-integrated at La Colombe. She was in her late 20s, and had moved to Canada from Côte d'Ivoire when she was young.

After receiving a Master's degree in International Development and Womens' Studies in Canada, she completed an organisational diagnostic for another CSO through a similar volunteer placement abroad. This was her second mandate of this kind, and she felt confident in her abilities. She first sought to replicate her previous experience and tried to plan the diagnostic activities jointly with La Colombe. However, she was confused because her project was not progressing. In her own words:

> I feel like the mandate is not important to La Colombe. I will say it like that. It's clear that in general, when we speak about organisational diagnostics and all, it makes [people] a bit scared. So you have to go carefully, give them options for what we can do. But I do not get the impression that there is really an interest here. I do not have the desire to just crunch numbers here.[22]

> …"Can I have the reports from the recent projects? The things you have written and all of that for the donors… with the qualitative and quantitative results and all that?" I have received nothing since August. Nobody gives me anything. They send me around "Go see [the accountant], go to Vogan," and then "oh, it was the secretary that had them, and she quit, she is gone so we do not know where everything is." I was sent around in circles like that.[23]

Transparency discourses are founded on the assumption that sharing information is done electronically (Vaccaro and Madsen, 2009; Kuriyan *et al.*, 2011). To a certain

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[22] Je me sens comme si le mandat n'était pas important pour la Colombe. Je vais dire ça comme ça. Mais c'est clair que en toute manière en générale, quand on parle de diagnostique organisationel et tout, ça fait un peu peur. Là il faut aller plus doucement, mettre des beignois qu'on peut faire. Mais là, j'ai pas l'impression qui est vraiment un intérêt en tant que tel. J'ai pas la mentalité de juste prendre les chiffres.

[23] "Est-ce que je peux avoir les rapports des derniers projets? Les trucs que vous avez écrit et tout ça pour les bailleurs et tout et tout avec les résultats qualitatifs et quantitifs et tout ça?" J'ai eu aucun rapport depuis le mois d'août. Personne me donne rien. Ils me font tourner. "Va voir Charles," et puis "va à Vogan," et puis "ah ben c'était le secrétaire qui les avaient, elle est démissionnée, elle est plus là donc on sait même pas où sont les affaires." Et puis ça me fait tourner de gauche à droit comme ça.

extent the belief that organisational documentation is easily managed shaped Nissa's understanding of what information should be available. On the one hand, there was reason to doubt whether La Colombe had the capacity to manage their documentation electronically due to the secretary's departure and the low ICT skills of staff (Chapter 8). However, Nissa assumed that the Director was moderating her access to the information because other planned activities, such as meetings with the Administration Council, were not permitted either. To Nissa, there was no technical reason why this information should be kept from her.

Nissa started to experience difficulties in adapting. She continued working according to the plan, and organised interviews with staff. However, she later discovered that the information staff had told her was false:

Some information that [Charlotte, volunteer] told me, who has been [in Vogan] for a long time, saw. And then to talk with other people who were there as volunteers. It's completely contrary to what they tell me. At the moment, what should I believe? I don't know anymore. [24]

Referring to the drip irrigation project that had been highlighted as a success (Sub-Section 7.4.3), Nissa could not reconcile why the organisation chose to provide false information. This affected her relationship with staff such that she took the decision to work independently on the diagnostic evaluation.

Working independently meant that she decided which aspects of the diagnostic to focus on. She said:

even if I do my diagnostic, I will do it based on what I observe... Even if the person isn't there, we can go and find them. We are more free, we have

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[24] Des informations que [Volunteer] qui est là-bas depuis longtemps voit.. et puis de parler avec d'autres gens qui était là comme coopérant. C'est complètement contraire de ce qu'eux ils me disent.. À ce moment, qui est-ce que je dois croire là? Je sais plus.

more options. Or more flexibility... Now, I already have a start with something with the questionnaires. I will start my diagnostic on their influence. After I will try further, more simple.[25]

Her quotation indicates that her initial approach changed, and she therefore felt entitled to prioritise her view of the situation, and to complete the diagnostic without La Colombe's full support. She turned to a technical/managerial evaluation approach, by creating a questionnaire and collecting data directly from beneficiaries, which she compiled in electronic documents to send to Crossroads. On the one hand, this approach was quick and efficient, given the time that remained. However, the role of ICT in this instance is not neutral as the information collected and transmitted to Crossroads is only partially representative of La Colombe and Nissa's experience. ICT has not been used to reveal the complex issues taking place, as it reflects the views and constraints of Nissa's perspective. Essentially, ICT fulfils the volunteering rhetoric because it enables Nissa to show that she is completing the diagnostic successfully.

A more extensive analysis of Nissa's experience also shows the diagnostic process as questionable and the limited view represented by the evaluation document as one-sided. For example, staff were reluctant to speak with me about Nissa. The Director had not communicated with the team in Vogan regarding her role, and they did not understand the purpose of her mandate. Nissa planned data collection activities in Pedakondji on two occasions whilst I was there. These activities did not fit into staff's working patterns, and staff prioritised other tasks mandated by the Director. In contrast to Nissa's view that she could complete the diagnostic on her own, the team assisted her when they could. They arranged meetings for her and

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[25] Même si je fais mon diagnostique je vais le faire en fonction de ce que moi j'observe... Ça veut dire même si la personne est pas présente, on peut quand-même aller chercher. On est plus libre quoi, on a plus des demarches. Ou plus de flexibilité. Là j'ai déjà un début de chose avec les formulaires. Je vais commencer mon diagnostique sur ses influences. Après j'essayerais plus loin, plus simple.

accompanied her to rural villages. When staff were not available, she became frustrated because she needed to return to Vogan later to complete data collection. Staff did not complain about the disruptions, however, I learned to recognise displeasure through silence in Togo.

Additionally, her evaluation approach was questionable due to the limited contact she had with beneficiaries and staff. She demonstrated a bias towards the technical/managerial system of knowing and doing because she felt a questionnaire and a few short observation periods were adequate to understand La Colombe's influence. I asked Nissa why she chose to live in Lomé, since she stated her reliance on observation and beneficiary feedback. She did not view living in Vogan as a necessary requirement to complete her diagnostic. According to her:

> *for sure you need to adapt to the organisation, and where we are, and no, I don't have any problems with that. But in order for me to adapt, they need to tell me "OK that really doesn't work for us." Maybe it's that. And everyone discusses.*[26]

This quotation shows Nissa's unrealistic expectation for direct, transparent communication. Clearly, both Nissa and the organisation did not meet their mutual commitments and they came to an impasse. However, without a copy of the volunteer's final diagnostic, I cannot confirm how transparently, or reflexively, she reported on these issues either. Thus, it was not clear how and whether these deficits were transmitted to Crossroads. Whilst this does not result specifically from ICT, it reflected how the use of ICTs likely contributed to masking such problems, by representing only one view of the situation, her view.

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[26] C'est sûr il faut s'adapter à l'organisation, là où on est et là, et non, j'ai pas des problèmes avec ça. Seulement pour que je puisse adapter, il faut qu'on me disent, « OK ça nous ça fonction pas du tout. » Peut-être c'est ça. Et tout le monde discute.

As Nissa struggled to overcome constraining organisational features and mutual objectives for the diagnostic, ICT instrumentally advantaged Nissa, by enabling her to transmit her view of La Colombe to Crossroads. The implicit role of ICT as supporting volunteers, who are positioned to integrate successfully and to respond to organisational needs effectively, achieved limited success in terms of the structural integration aims of the diagnostic. These aims also appear to be limited by the meanings the actors attach to ICT, such that ICT did not play a role to open up new communication channels, feedback loops, and mutual understanding between Crossroads, La Colombe and their beneficiaries. Through my observations, it was clear that Nissa's positionality and lack of cross-cultural effectiveness negated many of Ebrahim's (2007) propositions regarding organisational learning, yet this does not come through in technical reports transmitted electronically to Crossroads. Balboa's (2014) focus on inter-cultural understanding and the power of actors to influence practice is therefore important to include within discussions of organisational learning, especially across contexts. However, ICT enabled Nissa to mask her adaptation failures by collecting, processing and sending information independently.

9.2 Influencing skills development by building a website

Ebrahim (2007) and Balboa's (2014) views reflect a constructive notion of structural integration. They view learning as a means to balance the relationship accountability problem, but do not adequately question the actors' interests and intent in this process. In contrast, Chambers (1997) views learning as a means to dismantle dominant power hierarchies, which he argues is a precondition for learning as structural integration. This sub-section focuses on Pascal, a trained journalist originally from Cameroon, who volunteered at La Colombe to build La Colombe's organisational website. Initially, this mandate reflected nothing more than a means to

build La Colombe's communication capacity, but the intentions of the actors evolved as they began to construct and adopt the website. This sub-section explores the interactions between the website construction, and La Colombe's reframing of this activity in the context of their relationship with Crossroads. Pascal's secondary mandate objective to deliver training sessions likewise gave him license to influence the kinds of skills he taught and to whom. In this instance, Pascal's position, along with the symbolic qualities of ICT, enabled him to teach skills to staff that would not have otherwise been permitted within the hierarchical culture. Ultimately, it is important to recognise the destabilising effects ICTs can have on organisational structures, even if done so unintentionally. Chambers' (1997) perspective is useful in examining how Pascal used ICT for this purpose.

Pascal had been in Togo for almost six months and was leaving shortly after I arrived. Although he is a journalist, he had some experience developing websites. As with Nissa, he was based in Lomé, at headquarters. Unlike Nissa, building a website was not viewed contentiously by La Colombe. Initially, it was a straightforward process:

> We created the website on Wordpress. I bought the domain name myself. It
> was me that bought the theme because I had a budget with my mandate. I
> created the website on my own. Well, I first asked the secretary questions,
> who was there. There was a secretary. She had 15 years of experience
> here so I could chat with her about what they want…[27]

As he remarks, there were elements of the website that were determined without much input, such as the platform, and the domain name. His budget, provided by

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[27] On a créé [le site] sur Wordpress. J'ai acheté moi le nom de domaine. Disons c'est moi qui a acheté le thème parce-que j'avais un budget avec mon mandat. J'ai réalisé le site seul. Bon, j'ai posé des questions d'abord à la secrétaire, qui était là. Il y'avait une secrétaire. Elle avait 15 ans d'expérience ici donc j'ai pu chatter avec elle qu'est-ce qu'ils veulent…

Crossroads, ensured that he had dedicated funds to purchase the infrastructure required.

He then began discussions with the Director and Secretary about content and format of the website. Initially, they focused on static content items, which provided a general description of the organisation's mission and activities. To generate this content, Pascal needed to learn about the organisation's activities. Both Pascal and Nissa needed to learn about organisational practice within their mandates, but as opposed to a diagnostic, which was positioned to outline strengths and weaknesses of the organisation, the website was assumed positively to present La Colombe's activities. Furthermore, La Colombe is ultimately in complete control of the website. These aspects garnered more favourable conditions for Pascal to gain the trust needed to learn about La Colombe. He was thus invited to meetings to take pictures and to write articles on La Colombe's behalf because he did not seem to pose a threat to the organisation.

However, once the website was in place, Pascal progressed to the next stage of his mandate:

After that, you have to train people to update the website. It's not hard to know how to do, but the problem is also that knowing which things to put online, and also, how to write to put things online. And then, writing the articles, it's not easy. I am trying to teach them also to write in a journalistic way.[28]

According to Pascal, the difficult part of creating a website is to decide what to post on it, and to have the appropriate skills to write text for online consumption. Although

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[28] Après ça il faut former les gens pour savoir mettre en ligne le site. C'est pas compliqué à connaitre, mais le problème aussi c'est savoir mettre quels choses en ligne et aussi comment écrire pour pouvoir mettre en ligne. Et puis, écrire les articles, c'est pas facile. J'essaie de les former aussi à écrire de façon journalistique.

he had certain ideas about what this entails, as indicated by his intention to train staff to write in a journalistic way, he also sought the Director's support.

It was at this juncture that he began to confront obstacles. He had not been assigned a staff member to participate in skills training. He tried to convince the Director of the importance of updating the website, suggesting that they write about their ongoing activities, thus using the website to increase transparency. According to Pascal, the Director did not wish to dedicate staff to what she viewed as an obsolete activity. Nevertheless, as opposed to staff who exhibited strict loyalty to the Director, Pascal demonstrated greater individual responsibility. Increasing individual responsibility and transparency are two of Chambers' (1997) key factors for disruption. He went against the Director's wishes to train people he deemed fit for the task:

> *At a certain point, I said that you have to give me someone to train, but they gave me no one. I trained a group. The JAID group. Youth in Action for Development Initiatives. It's a group that works with La Colombe… I trained them on the site, journalistic writing and everything.* [29]

Once the Director discovered the JAID group had been given access to La Colombe's website, she revised her initial decision. Pascal's impression was that she did not trust the JAID group, and did not want them to have access to the website. Hence, Pascal's actions demonstrate another of Chambers' (1997) disruptive factors, relating to decentralising power and control. He was then allocated a local volunteer and a PROVONAT to train.

The local volunteer, Marie, a woman in her fifties, was the most skilled and motivated to contribute to the website. Through observing two of Pascal's training

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[29] À moment donné, je disais qu'il faut me donner quelqu'un pour former, mais on me donne personne. J'ai formé tout un groupe. Le groupe JAID. Jeunes en action aux initiatives en développement. C'est un group qui travail avec le Colombe… Je les ai formé site, écriture journalistique et tout.

sessions in October, 2013, Marie contributed new ideas, discussed writing strategies, and asked me questions about inserting photographs within articles. However, she was not available regularly. Pascal explained:

> *She has her own store, and she has her own association… She is here because the secretary left. In addition, the problem is that she's the daughter of a… A person who is a member of the administration council of La Colombe. It's more like a favour. Voila.*[30]

He felt the Director's choice was problematic because Marie did not have time to run the website due to her other commitments. Marie confirmed she could not assist in the long term, but that she was doing a favour for the Director. In this instance, the instrumental benefit of the website has very little to do with its functional utility. Instead, the Director seemed intent on placating Pascal so that he would report back to Crossroads that La Colombe had completed the pre-defined requirements. This is an example where La Colombe simply tried to appease its upwards accountability relationship to Crossroads rather than working with the volunteer to discuss its concerns, which were not actually clear to me. I did not have a chance to ask the Director about this.

Regardless, Pascal continued to train five people to write about development activities for their Website. His programme of journalism training covered investigative journalism, opinion pieces and field reporting. He gave participants exercises on how to gather facts, to interview beneficiaries, and in French writing. As he had almost finished his mandate, I observed and interviewed only one PROVONAT mentee, Marthe, who had participated in his programme. As her learning diagram (Figure 9-1) shows, she outlines the back and forth process between her and Pascal to complete

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[30] Elle a son propre boutique, elle a son propre association, elle a... Elle est ici parce-que le secrétaire est partie. En plus le problème c'est qu'elle est fille à la... Une personne qui est membre de la conseil d'administration de la Colombe. C'est plus comme un faveur. Voilà.

the exercises. Whilst Marthe explained in her interview that she did not enjoy the French writing exercises, she also explained how learning to manage the website made the writing tasks interesting to her. As Chambers (1997, p.233) argues "it is easier, quicker and less dominating to provide opportunities for new behaviour and experiences, than frontally to challenge belief systems." This says little about the outcomes of his training programme, but establishes that the website provided a new means to practice transparency and learning from beneficiaries that did not directly oppose La Colombe's hierarchical functioning.

Figure 9-1 Learning through writing exercises for the Web
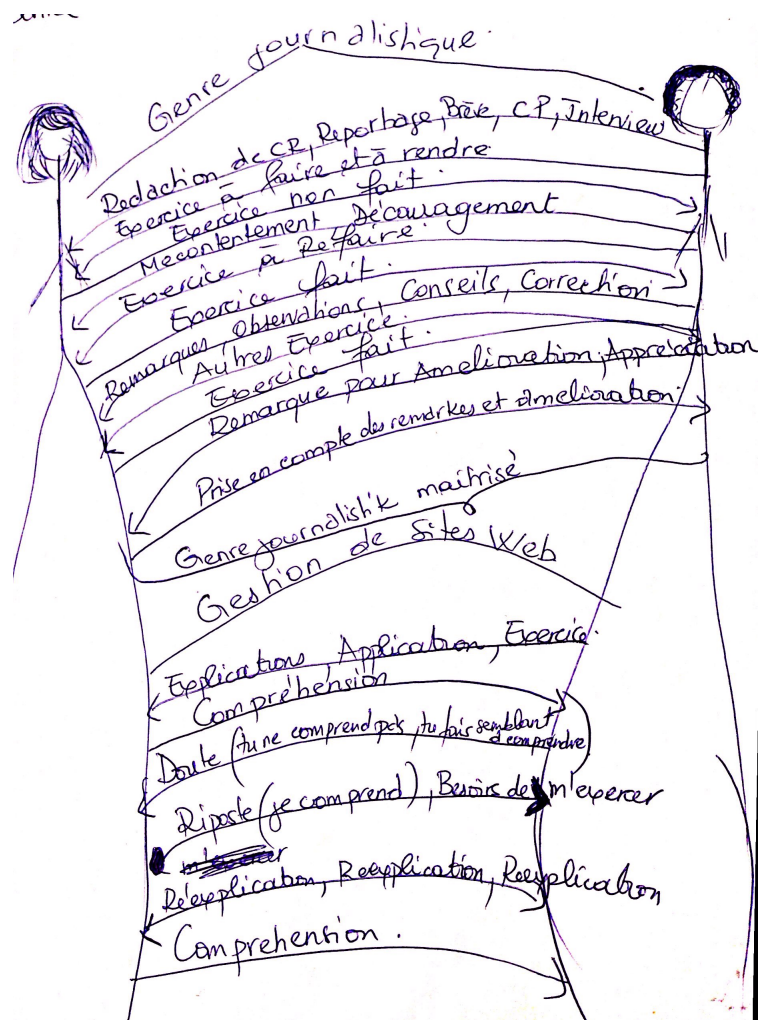
Source: Marthe, PROVONAT.

Overall, Pascal's experience building La Colombe's website was very different from contributing to Gender Links' website. For Gender Links, the primary difficulty was obtaining the resources and technical skills to build the website according to its needs. At La Colombe, the Director saw no benefit of the website and chose to take it down. This demonstrates her absolute power over the organisation, and that there were no significant changes in the underlying organisational power structures. However, Pascal's experience demonstrates some interaction between ICT and increased awareness of the accountability context for his mentees, because speaking to beneficiaries and gathering facts encourages them to develop their own understanding of the context rather than relying purely on the Director for instructions. Furthermore, neither Pascal nor Crossroads acknowledged the political nature of the website project, failing to understand how or why La Colombe chose not to commit to the agreed upon plan. This indicates a need for greater awareness of different meanings and purposes that ICTs may generate in context.

9.3 Disputing mandates and signalling problems through ICT

The last volunteer of this analysis highlights the contributions of ICT to support structural integration through real-time learning and expressions of dissent. It is common for volunteer projects to change substantially by the time the volunteer arrives in the field (Devereau, 2008). Volunteers may face difficulty changing their expectations, especially if what is asked of them is drastically different from their skill set (Georgeou, 2012). As with Nissa, it is also possible that volunteers find reason to question organisational integrity. According to Hirschman (1970), the three potential categories of dissent in the context of volunteering mean one of three outcomes: 1) volunteers repatriate, thus refusing to complete their mandate, and incurring significant loss of development resources; 2) volunteers voice their accountability

concerns; or 3) they complete their mandate without complaint. Bovens (1998) argued that introducing alternative channels within which volunteers could voice their complaints, reduces the chance that negative consequences, like repatriation, will occur. Likewise, this potentially increases the chance that Crossroads and La Colombe gain feedback key to structural integration. As Gigler *et al.* (2014) has argued, ICTs introduce new channels within which actors give feedback and gain voice, but that these channels change the practice context. This sub-section investigates these claims in Charlotte's case.

Charlotte, a Québécoise in her late 20s, was the only volunteer based in Vogan, arriving in Togo four months prior to my arrival. She had no experience of living or working in a developing country. She had recently completed a Master's in Urban Design, and this was her first work experience in her domain. Her mandate was clear at the outset, but the organisation's needs had changed by the time she arrived in Togo. She had difficulty explaining to me what she was supposed to be doing. In general, Charlotte had difficulty adapting to organisational life for a variety of personal, health and professional reasons. In an interview, she reflected on the problems she confronted when she initially arrived:

> *[it] threw [me] because it's a museum and not a touristic site. So, for sure*
> *the purpose since the beginning changed considerably, but they did not get*
> *feedback by consulting with me, because it was me who found out this*
> *information myself. It's not like they told me that things have changed, or*
> *that they met with me to tell me that they have adjusted the mandate.* [31]

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[31] Ça nous a pris parce que là on comprenne que c'est un musé c'est un musé et pas un site touristique. Donc, c'est sûr que les engagements dès le départ ont changé considérément mais ils ont pas eu du feedback de consultation avec moi parce que c'est moi qui trouvait l'information au fur et à mesure. C'est pas si qu'on me disait que les choses avaient changé ou on m'a rencontré pour me dire « et là on a ajusté les engagements. »

Charlotte's original mandate was to design a touristic site at the CAF. This purpose changed considerably when she discovered that La Colombe had already constructed a museum building there. The presence of the building made it obvious that the project had changed, but the Director did not explain this to her.

The Director had specific ideas she wanted Charlotte to work on, but her ideas had not yet crystallised. The Director was also traveling and occupied with other tasks. There were likewise no staff in Vogan that knew what the Director wanted. As Charlotte remarked "*Here, there is nobody that is in tourism. There is no one that knows, and no one that has time, who even understands the purpose, so… I think if I had a [La Colombe] counterpart, it would be different.*[32] With no clear direction, the volunteer was struggling to remain positive about her mandate, and she was also suffering from a serious infection and some culture shock.

In October, 2013, I was invited to observe another donor visit, this time with the French Cultural Centre. The Centre funded the construction of the museum, and two donor representatives came to see the construction site prior to disbursing the second round of funds. During the visit, Jacques, a La Colombe manager, presented some of Charlotte's research findings, and focused on her impressive background in urban design. When I relayed this information back to Charlotte, she told me she had not been invited to the meeting. I assumed she was ill and chose not to come. She was confused why staff refused to cooperate with her, whilst simultaneously using her work. Perhaps Jacques viewed Charlotte's presence as a symbolic advantage, in order to gain credibility with their donors, as Georgeou (2012 p.21) has reported in her study of development volunteers. However, it did not occur to me to ask Jacques about his thoughts on this at the time.

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[32] Là ici il y a personne qui est dans le tourisme, il y a personne qui connait, personne qui avait le temps, qui comprenait même ma mission, donc… Je pense que si j'avais un autre homologue ce serait différent.

Charlotte was visibly distraught, and I felt a need to support her because I remembered the severe isolation I experienced when I was a volunteer in Morocco. I suffered considerable harassment daily whilst living there in 2003, and I felt very isolated. I did not have Internet at home, and I chose not to frequent Internet cafes due to the harassment that ensued within those places. With her own Internet key (Chapter 8), Charlotte had connectivity on her laptop. She did not need as much support as I did, in part because she was in regular contact with her family. Whilst it may seem subtle, having the freedom to seek this psycho-social support was invaluable, as Mumford (2000) argued is key to mitigating culture shock. Had she been subject to the same conditions as La Colombe staff, she would not have had this privilege.

She also spoke with the Crossroads Officer in Montreal every other week via Skype. In contrast to my volunteering experiences, I only submitted a mid-term report and final report to my officers. Charlotte's regular and ongoing support was never available to me. During Skype conversations, Charlotte shared her impressions and details of La Colombe's project. When her project failed to progress, the Officer scheduled meetings with the Director to help clarify her activities. Charlotte also shared problems she observed, which signalled follow-up items to the Officer. These conversations also relayed information about the volunteer's personal relationships with staff members, and her opinions of their roles within project work. In this way, the Officer could gain a better understanding of organisational practice, which can supplement written reports invaluably. Thus, these personal and frequent interactions via Skype contributed interpretive/practice-based understandings. The Officer likewise had a window to learn about both success and failure as it was unfolding in real-time. Furthermore, many critical project-related details were omitted during donor visits (Sub-Section 7.4.3), which suggests that this learning channel added some value.

Despite the Officer's involvement, Charlotte's relationship with the Director did not improve. In her learning process diagram (Figure 9-2), she drew three stakeholder groups in Togo: herself, the Director, and the community. The Director is positioned between her and the La Colombe fieldwork, but there is a communication breakdown apparent between the Director and the volunteer, which impacts her direct contribution to the project. Charlotte, like Nissa and Pascal, demonstrated high individual responsibility. Charlotte came up with two strategies to proceed on her own. Both strategies incorporated ICT significantly.

Figure 9-2. Learning whilst stuck in the middle of an accountability web
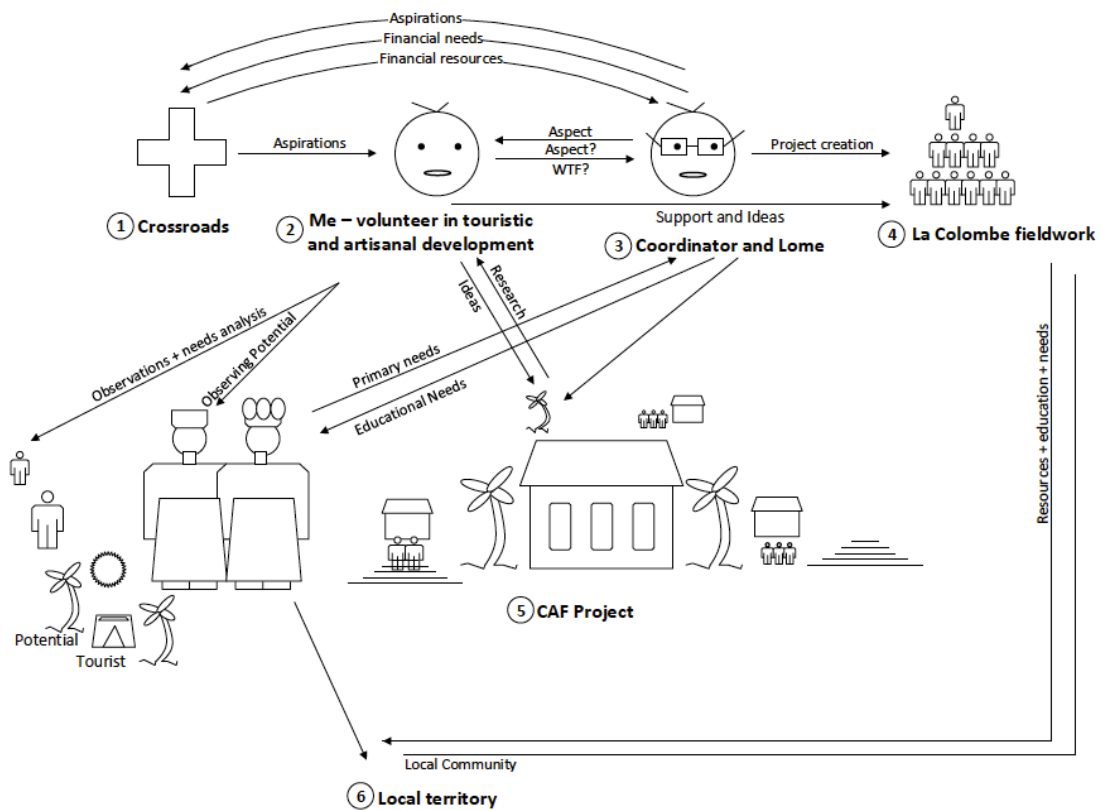
Source: Redrawn image of Charlotte's, a volunteer, picture (see Appendix 10).

Her first strategy was to try a new way to cooperate. According to Charlotte, the communication breakdown between her and the Director happened because of

forgetfulness when relying only on telephone communication. The Director was also too busy to read lengthy emails. Charlotte drew diagrams of her ideas and sent the diagrams instead of text:

> *If you don't capture her attention, it's over. So the way I communicate with her is usually to send her diagrams, or to use images in order to help her understand what I'm saying. So instead of doing a work plan or a normal text, I will do the same in the form of a diagram.*[33]

Within this framing, the volunteer believed that the communication method was not effective, and attempted to improve it through the use of ICT. However, none of the volunteers experienced much success with responsiveness to their ideas. Nevertheless, these records demonstrate her attempts to communicate, and can potentially serve to bring cultural differences in communication styles to the fore, thus demonstrating some inter-cultural understanding (Balboa, 2014).

Charlotte's second strategy was to find ways to contribute by working independently. She began to use the Internet to research tourism potential within the community on her own. In her words:

> *I'm in the field, but I do not really know the way, so I have to research the territory, to know what there is to visit. What is there, like interests, to see. I found documents, ones that were already done on tourism, a tourism diagnostic. I do not have time, or the help necessary, so I took the information, I found it on the Internet.* [34]

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[33] Si t'as pas capturé son attention, c'est fini. Donc ma façon de communiquer avec elle c'est souvent de faire des diagrammes, ou utiliser des images pour faire en sorte qu'elle comprenne ce que je veux dire. Donc au lieu de faire un plan de travail ou un texte normale je vais faire ça sous la forme de diagramme.

[34] Je suis sur le terrain, mais je connais pas tel voie, donc il faut que je recherche le territoire, savoir qu'est-ce qu'il y a à visiter. Qu'est-ce qu'il y a comme intérêt à voir. Je recherche des documents, qui avait déjà fait sur le tourisme, un diagnostic pour le tourisme, comme j'ai pas le temps, puis l'aide nécessaire j'ai pris de l'information, je l'ai trouvé sur internet.

Much like Nissa, Charlotte turned to a technical/managerial learning strategy enabled by ICT to continue with her work. Here, Charlotte utilised ICT to reinforce her professional accountability first and foremost.

In sum, Charlotte acted as an intermediary between La Colombe and Crossroads because she needed support, and had limited experience to confront the obstacles she met. She used ICT to mediate cultural differences that impinged on her integration into the organisational context. However, she did not have enough power to influence the way that work is done at La Colombe. The Director was also not receptive to her attempts to improve communication. From Charlotte's perspective, she expected an immediate response from Crossroads regarding the accountability problems that were caused by the Director's leadership. From Crossroads' perspective, building partnerships is a long-term process, and takes a mutual learning approach to solving conflicts (Chapter 7). The Officer did not immediately act on information received but probably did build a deeper understanding of the context. The volunteer's frustration then stems from not having the same understanding of Crossroads' response and reasoning. Likewise, volunteers are often given little information of the history between organisations, sometimes because they do not have it, and other times, because information is lost or forgotten. In this case, reciprocity in knowledge-sharing was needed to circumvent Charlotte's ultimate failure to complete her mandate.

9.4 Conclusion: ICT as tools for disruption?

The above analysis focuses on three volunteer participants. Whilst this is a small sample, they represent a significant portion of La Colombe's total human resource capital. As a group, Canadian volunteers shared similar traits in their engagement with the organisational context, and their approach to ICT in this regard. Regardless of their different backgrounds, Watts (2002) has argued that volunteers, as cultural

outsiders, with dedicated resources and independent positions enable them to practice non-conventional techniques to influence change. ICT, and their privileged access to it in Togo, was a key way to reinforce their powerful position as intermediaries and independent actors. These advantages and practices had both positive and negative effects.

It is vital to understand these effects as interactions between volunteering, learning and accountability in context. In contrast to Gender Links' Results for Change framework (Sub-Section 4.4.1), which outlined explicit links between ICT functionalities, learning outcomes, and responsibilities, it was generally impossible to identify such clear links here. A major reason for that is because ICT has changed volunteering significantly. The primary positive effect of ICT regards the additional channel of real-time learning that is introduced, as Bovens (1998) and Gigler (2014) suggest. `This channel was used in both constructive and disruptive ways. Constructively, Charlotte attempted to resolve communication problems and to seek advice and mediation. In contrast, the volunteers highlighted key organisational transparency problems, such that all volunteers enacted strategies to decentralise power and control within the organisational hierarchy. However, these strategies, based on their individual notions of responsibility and responsiveness, did not ultimately have significant long-term effect. The over-arching negative effect of ICT is that it enabled the volunteers to work independently. According to Georgeou (2012), volunteers enter into relationships and expect to engage with locals in an equitable fashion. However, volunteers were reluctant to release control over their projects and how they wanted to contribute, due in part to ICT which facilitated independent work. In terms of structural integration, it is still up to Crossroads and La Colombe to decide how and whether to use the volunteers' suggestions and contributions.

In comparing the perspectives on structural integration three main insights come to light. First, constructive notions of structural integration enabled an

exploration of ICT that was informed by situated views of accountability. Ebrahim's (2007) holistic view of organisations includes concerns for the form and domain of staff empowerment. However, Balboa's (2014) ideas are especially relevant because it adds sensitivity to inter-cultural skills, and emphasises power imbalances within organisations and across contexts. However, constructive notions assume, perhaps too optimistically, that the actors are working towards organisational mission objectives. The disruptive approaches, such as dissent (Bovens, 1998) and power decentralisation (Chambers, 1997), were useful in my case because they shed light on the tenuous relationship between organisational mission, development approach, and learning towards structural integration.

CROSS-CASE ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION

CHAPTER 10

CONCLUSION

This chapter concludes the thesis by bringing together the main themes that have run throughout the previous chapters. It begins with a cross-case analysis that outlines how the empirical findings give insights into the central research question: *how and why do ICTs contribute to learning and accountability in relationships between donors and CSOs, and in CSO practice?* The chapter then summarises the theoretical contributions of the research, and outlines its policy and practice implications. It ends with a reflective discussion of the limitations of the thesis, as well as areas for future research.

10.1   Understanding the contributions of ICT to learning and accountability

This thesis investigates how ICTs may contribute to resolving the relationship and representation accountability problems in donor-CSO relationships (Chapter 1). It takes a situated view of accountability as its point of departure, and problematises dominant accountability theories and practices within development aid relationships. It also highlights the need to address power relationships through accountability, and examines ICT for its potential to empower marginalised actors and organisations. Learning is a key process that contributes to both of these accountability themes, by enabling donors and CSOs to learn from beneficiaries, about organisational practice and to formally integrate different ideas and practices into organisational policy.

Chapter 3 suggested that gaining an understanding of the contributions of ICT to learning and accountability entails giving a detailed and situated interpretation, whilst focusing on revealing and challenging underlying meanings and structures that reinforce the status quo in organisations (see Chapter 3; Doolin and McLeod, 2005; Walsham, 2006). This section therefore examines the empirical findings in both case studies by: 1) interpreting the roles ICTs play in accountability processes; 2) evaluating the links between ICT, learning and accountability in context; and 3) deriving why the roles and practices of ICT have taken root.

10.1.1 ICTs in accountability processes

This sub-section responds to Sections 2.3-2.4 of the conceptual framework by examining what ICT roles are constructed and maintained by the actors, and discusses the implications that these have on accountability discourses. It refers primarily to the instrumental uses of ICTs in both cases.

ICTs and Accountability Practices

Section 2.2 characterised the situated aspects of accountability as contextualised understanding of the actors, and their roles and functions in organisational and relationship dynamics. Situated accountability refers to the diverse accountability forms and purposes practised at individual, institutional and relationship levels. Basic assumptions described by Frink and Klimoski (1998), Roberts and Scapens (1985), and Koppell (2005) were reflected in my research: that accountability manifests through sets of practices that are formulated by many competing forces, such as aid instruments, history, leadership, organisational mission, and the influence of wider contextual conditions and work patterns. There were three key similarities across cases in the ways in which ICTs interacted with the accountability context. First, the roles of ICT were generated within donor-CSO relationship and organisational practice, both of which are constructed within wider accountability discourses.

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Second, differences across cases were also driven by how the actors perceived and used technology within their accountability practice (Orlikowski, 1992). Third, there were both harmonious and discordant trends that influenced the interaction between ICT and accountability practices. These three levels of interaction frame how ICT contributes to accountability across both case studies.

There were significant differences between the two case studies relating to how accountability discourses and practices were constructed. Figure 10-1 summarises the dominant accountability discourses, the roles of ICT and their contributions of ICT to accountability that arise from both harmonious and discordant ICT trends. Details are given below per case. Accountability discourses found within the ovals at the top of Figure 10-1 shape the meanings and perceptions of ICT which facilitate accountability objectives. Yet, these goals may not be achievable when one of the discordant trends presides over the uses of ICT in context.

Figure 10-1 Discourses and meanings of accountability and ICT

CASE STUDY 1

CASE STUDY 2

ACCOUNTABILITY DISCOURSES

To focus programme management on efficiency and effectiveness through results-based approaches.

To improve gender equality through accountability to mission, and by influencing state government and media institutions who serve citizens.

To enable CSOs greater flexibility to manage programmes responsively.

To improve GAC's results-based management approach.

To build partnerships and respond to local needs through volunteering and capacity building.

To avoid imposing GAC reporting requirements on local organisations.

ROLES OF ICT

- Impose standardisation, and communicating direction.
- Monitor and give feedback to staff.
- Collect and analyse information.
- Save money by building/using what they have.
- Monitor gender equality indicators, compile research publications, distribute findings.
- Publish government and media gender mainstreaming progress.
- Offer some opportunities to participate.

- Communicate regularly via telephone and Skype to direct operations internally and to build trust inter-organisationally.
- Support volunteers to integrate and to adapt successfully.
- Collect and analyse information.
- Support organisational capacity building.

CONTRIBUTIONS OF ICT TO ACCOUNTABILITY

HARMONIOUS TRENDS

- Enable state and media monitoring.
- Educate and empower government representatives, professionals and citizens.
- Facilitate networked collaboration between partner organisations, and different levels of government.

DISCORDANT TRENDS

- Maintain donor-conditions on external reporting requirements.
- Centralise programmatic decision-making.
- Enable control of staff and programme activities.

HARMONIOUS TRENDS

- Facilitates social support during the volunteering process.
- Real-time learning and problem resolution.
- Builds trust and understanding between organisations.

DISCORDANT TRENDS

- Severe ICT inequality.
- No sanctions or evidence of learning from failure.
- Lack of volunteer integration and independent work.
- Limited success/ repatriation.

Source: Author.

In the DFID-Gender Links case, ICT is explicitly depicted as a critical infrastructure for a growing organisation, which is crucial to fulfilling Gender Links' mission objectives related to state and media monitoring, and regional collaboration (Section 4.2). DFID's original intention to garner innovation from its recipients by attempting to refrain from imposing reporting conditions implies that ICT can develop within a framework focused on Gender Links' mission. Yet, discordant accountability trends, such as the centralised organisational decision-making structure, emphasised technical/managerial aspects of efficiency and effectiveness. The dominant uses of ICT for reporting primarily enhanced the controllability dimension of accountability. This entailed reducing field staff responsibilities in favour of a centrally-managed, technical approach to organisational learning (Sub-Section 4.4.1). As time went on, the sources and frequency of data collection increased, which required incorporating additional and parallel strategies to maintain oversight over information management (Sub-Section 5.2.4). Workloads increased substantively.

The role of ICT to collect evidence of results in standardised, consistent ways thus had two main effects. First, it expanded the organisation's capacity to establish reliable, controllable data-gathering practices across multiple countries. Second, it reduced field staff responsibilities for learning from beneficiaries and about their practice. My findings are consistent with Koppell's (2005) observation that organisations focus on the dimension of accountability which it believes contributes most to its performance. However, these accountability priorities wield a dominant influence on organisational ICT, and changes the perceptions and practices of staff significantly (Sections 6.2-6.3).

In contrast, La Colombe had adopted much less ICT than had Gender Links. Chapter 8 outlined organisational, national ICT infrastructure, and development aid

relationship determinants as primary reasons for the limited use of ICT in Case Study 2. However, there was a similar dynamic between the case studies related to the interaction between ICT, accountability practices and discourses. Within this case study, accountability discourses focused on the contributions of ICTs towards supporting La Colombe's organisational capacity building objectives through volunteering (Chapter 9). Yet, the Crossroads volunteers' projects were not without problems. Conflicts and roadblocks arose, which indicated discordant accountability trends. Volunteers attempted to overcome constraints (such as, the hierarchical accountability structure, lack of direction, and lack of support) and to build shared meanings (for example, coming to agreement on the terms and purposes of mandates). With such apparent difficulty across all three mandates, one might question the effects of volunteering. Overall, the volunteers achieved limited success in using ICT to strengthen accountability through structural integration (see also Sub-Section 10.1.2), to open alternative communication channels, and to facilitate problem-solving (Chapter 9). There are many potential explanations for why this situation developed. The organisations sought to prioritise the completion of volunteer placements rather than dealing with the underlying problems stemming from poor direction and lack of volunteer integration. The implicit role of ICT therefore seemed to reinforce the volunteering rhetoric rather than to strengthen accountability through organisational capacity building. This indicates a similar tendency in Case Study 2 for certain accountability priorities to wield a dominant influence on the main perceptions and practices of technology.

For donors, practitioner experiences across both cases demonstrated similarities relating to their perceptions and uses of ICT. Practitioners struggled with the usability and relevance of their institutionally-mandated systems. For the GAC Officer, tools designed specifically to aggregate results and support development learning were burdensome to her. They were not designed with her needs in mind (or

the CSOs for that matter). In contrast, the DFID Communications Officer struggled with storing and searching through her database to find information requested by other internal divisions. Easterly's (2006; 2013) critiques argued that aid agencies do not solve development problems effectively because they are composed of tyrannical experts who think about development inappropriately. However, my research suggests that the imposition of programme and information structure by donors is partly caused by difficulties arising from ICT-use.

In sum, it appears that there are many positive links between accountability practices, discourses and ICTs, but there is also a tendency for discordant ICT trends to overshadow organisational ICT use. ICT is primarily being used to serve an organisational imperative of improving institutional accountability properties, but that its application (or the lack thereof) is understood in somewhat simplified terms. For the Gender Links-DFID case, the overarching message is that ICTs help to improve internal accountability, and the main issue is to employ the correct functionality. For the La Colombe-Crossroads case, the potential uses of ICT for accountability are not a priority. In some instances, such as the cyberdialogues (Sub-Section 5.3.1) or La Colombe's website project (Section 9.2), motives are driven by the belief in the potential of ICT to strengthen accountability. A concern is that these functional and technologically-driven perceptions of ICT may negatively affect responsive forms of accountability, which is discussed further below.

The influence of ICTs on downwards accountability

Section 2.3 problematised downwards accountability in development studies literature, arguing that much of the discourse is founded on participatory development assumptions. Yet, there are strong and weak versions of participatory theory at play (Brett, 2003). Moreover, participatory development ideals do not always translate into the issues that donors and CSOs face, especially as CSOs increasingly operate at

networked and international levels (Fowler, 1997; Balboa, 2014). Furthermore, much of the research that engages with ICT to improve downwards accountability focuses on systems and functionalities that are embedded within participatory development approaches (Frohlick, Bhat and Jones, 2009; de Moor, 2010; Van Der Windt, 2013). Such research does not consider the sorts of development approaches encountered in my research, nor does it address the structural character of the development aid system. My research considered participation as a key accountability process mechanism (Ebrahim, 2003a), but it also examined multiple forms and domains of empowerment across individuals and organisations.

It was generally difficult to determine downwards accountability processes in formal and explicit ways. Thus, my findings support those of Kilby (2006), in that downwards accountability is often discretionary. The formalised procedures reported across cases during interviews, such as beneficiary analysis and consultations, were far removed from observed everyday ICT practice. Differentiating the type of influence of ICT on downwards accountability in Table 2.4 was a particularly helpful conceptual tool to think through downwards accountability assumptions and practices according to domains (beneficiaries, staff, organisations) and forms (technical, administrative, political) of empowerment. As a reminder, Table 2.4 outlines four types of power relations (power within, power to, power over and power with) across four types of interplays between ICT and accountability. In my research, there were many positive but also negative interaction effects which highlight the multi-dimensional ways in which ICTs contribute directly and indirectly to downwards accountability.

In contrast, it is complicated to synthesise the findings according to Table 2.4 since there are multiple heterogeneous beneficiary and staff groups within the cases. Figure 10-1 above should be used to gain a general sense of the dominant ICT and accountability trends. Gender Links beneficiaries I encountered in my research included journalists, citizens, government officials, and partner CSO staff. In Case

Study 2, La Colombe staff, PROVONAT, volunteers, CAF learners and citizens can also be considered beneficiaries of Crossroads and GAC. Table 2.4 is best used to explore holistically the different types of interactions that can be observed between beneficiaries, staff and ICT within the accountability context. Two key examples illustrate the value of this approach to understanding the influence of ICT on downwards accountability. The first example centres on Case Study 1, within which the dominant perception of ICT reflected a technical/managerial focus on controllability and productivity as outlined above. Whilst there were some activities that enabled beneficiaries to participate actively through ICT, the majority of interactions between staff and beneficiaries contributed to administrative and technical organisational capacities, which did not contribute significantly to beneficiary empowerment directly. Moreover, junior and country staff had less control over ICT, and increasingly resisted organisational ICT environments (Section 6.3), which is a consistent finding across ICT and M&E literature (Mebrahtu, 2002; Strong and Volkoff, 2010). Country staff typically have direct access to beneficiaries, but do not have *power to* use ICT to change accountability properties, nor any *power over* how ICT is designed or applied. Thus, it is important to note the disjuncture between the capacity of senior managers to outline ICT for engaging beneficiaries, and those with direct access who may have better understandings of beneficiary realities. These findings imply that the influence of ICT on beneficiaries and country staff is typically disempowering.

However, Gender Links' demonstrated significant networked and regional contributions to policy reform, and government and media institutional reform. This is evidence of *joint action* to transform underlying resources and power constraints, which would not be possible without ICT. Gender Links' capacity to achieve its mission is also an expression of downwards accountability (Najam, 1996), and may lead to significant empowerment gains for beneficiaries, albeit not through ICT

directly. Thus, my research supports Mansell's (2002, p.408) argument that powerful actors promote ICT strategies which "come to be regarded as the most effective way to develop new media applications and it becomes more difficult to envisage alternatives that are consistent with a goal of empowering the majority of citizens in their interactions." Examining interactions between power relations, ICT and downwards accountability within development aid relationships as an integrated whole, enable these contradictions to be viewed inter-dependently.

The second example highlights interactions between ICT and the accountability context. For instance, ICT is often portrayed as a means to enable CSOs and donors to increase downwards accountability (Ashley *et al.*, 2009; Banks, 2009; Kuriyan *et al.*, 2011). ICT is not often seen as a means through which accountability is expressed. Across both case studies, staff felt personal and professional responsibility to interact with stakeholders in culturally-appropriate ways. Gender Links staff reported tension between this felt responsibility and the dominant role ICT had taken in their everyday practices. This tension was exacerbated by extreme variation in communication needs and patterns, and the rapid growth of their programmes. Staff had different strategies to cope with heterogeneity, including both constructive and subversive strategies. Constructive strategies included organising physical cyber-dialogue locations, offering multiple Summit application form types, providing IT training, and keeping track of communication preferences. Subversively, staff chose not to fulfil mandated targets in order to support beneficiaries to fill in applications or feedback forms. In a subtle way, staff can be seen resisting the main focus of ICT to expand the organisation's reach by choosing to focus on beneficiaries that need help.

Messner (2009) and Roberts (1991) suggested that there are deep, situated, ethical aspects of accountability that form the socialising fabric of organisations. Identity, perception and ethics are inherently difficult to account for, which may also

lead managers to focus on notions of accountability that are easier to explicate. The dominant meanings and perceptions of ICT across the case studies do not adequately frame how staff develop their sense of duty to respond to beneficiaries and to meet their needs through ICT. Viewing ICT as constitutively entangled in practice contexts improves on the tendency to see ICT as something that contributes to downwards accountability through specific functionality. As such, this thesis emphasises the need to shift mind-sets to develop greater awareness and mutual responsibilities for ICT across contexts and organisational capacities (Section 8.4). It improves on the functionalist tendency of donors and managers to implement new ICT tools and procedures without developing a mutual understanding of their implications across contexts and perspectives. The bridging approach to ICT outlined in Section 8.4 implies that functionalities deemed appropriate at the organisational level, must also be considered from the perspective of beneficiaries and of donors holistically.

10.1.2 How ICTs contribute to the links between learning and accountability

This sub-section delves into situated learning and accountability practices that are afforded by ICT. It concentrates on the links between learning and accountability to focus on the intersections between learning, accountability and ICT, and considers how ICT has enabled specific outcomes and effects. The three links are treated separately: 1) learning from beneficiaries; 2) learning about organisational practice; and 3) development learning, outlined in Section 2.5.

Accountability through learning from beneficiaries

My research contrasts bleakly with the rhetoric of ICT as an architecture of participation (Thompson, 2008; Ashley *et al.*, 2009; Sadowsky, 2012). Learning from beneficiaries through ICT primarily occurred through elicitation activities. Learning

through ICT as a component of practice or as structural integration, is not the main preoccupation for donors or CSOs. My research contributes to three ongoing debates within the literature: 1) whether ICT can add a feedback channel between beneficiaries, CSOs and donors; 2) whether beneficiaries can be engaged effectively through ICT; and 3) whether there is a need to establish ethical safeguards for beneficiaries due to ICT.

Case Study 2 demonstrated the limited opportunities to learn from beneficiaries using ICT in rural Togo, where lack of access is the main issue. For many practitioners, a main principle is to use inclusive ICT that the poorest and most-marginalised have access to (Banks, 2009; Social Impact Lab, 2016; Waugaman, 2016). Strategies incorporating intermediaries who can work around access constraints have also been suggested (Van Der Windt, 2013). These strategies fail to address the underlying access issues that the poorest and most marginalised face to have a voice through ICT channels. Yet, Gigler *et al.* (2014, p.42) emphasised that "the first step in any citizen feedback initiative should be to make explicit the purpose of feedback for a given project as well as the project's ultimate development objective for all relevant stakeholders." This statement centres the discourse on the broad development objective and suggests that donors and CSOs can selectively choose when it is appropriate to enable citizens to have a voice through ICT. Instead, I argue that the first step to learn from beneficiaries is to recognise that donors and CSOs have a responsibility to listen to all beneficiary voices, and that ICT provides one option to support this. Gender Links dedicated its own resources and planned some IT sessions within its programmes to help beneficiaries gain the skills needed to use ICT. Whilst such initiatives may have mitigated some access constraints, donors may not see them as being necessary. Likewise, such activities will not mitigate problems with the way in which learning from beneficiaries is pursued.

There is still a need to be critical of the way in which donors and CSOs learn from beneficiaries (Chambers, 1997). There were many missed opportunities and limited engagement when learning from beneficiaries happened primarily as an elicitation activity. Within the Gender Links-DFID case, there was a wealth of feedback collected from beneficiaries (Chapter 5), but DFID had specific case study requests rather than making sense of the feedback that already existed (Section 5.1). My research also focused on the extent that ICT enabled Gender Links staff to learn about beneficiary realities, to understand their priorities and to advocate on their behalf. The few examples within which CSOs learned from beneficiaries using ICT at Gender Links were not conducive to even knowing who the beneficiaries were. Most of the ICT practices aimed at learning about beneficiary realities through surveys, quizzes, and case study research were often rooted in technical/managerial approaches. Therefore, whilst beneficiaries may be active participants in physical environments, they were invariably reduced to passive actors in ICT environments. In contrast, Cyberdialogues demonstrated benefits in line with Tacchi *et al.*'s (2009) view that participatory learning through ICT can facilitate debate and the construction of locally relevant content. However, due to the limited nature of participatory learning through ICT in both case studies, the potential positive effects outlined in the literature seem inflated. As De Moor (2010) has argued, there are many attractive uses of ICT to involve citizens in participatory governance initiatives, within which CSOs could enable higher levels of participation. However, the competitive and results-based development aid culture seemed to discourage Gender Links from focusing their efforts on online community building, ultimately choosing to adopt a more directed approach to engaging beneficiaries through ICT (Sub-Section 6.1.3). In line with Holzer *et al.'s* (2004) perspective, participatory learning could be improved through targeted intervention and facilitation. Viewing ICT as an architecture of participation does not seem sufficient to address the identified challenges.

Furthermore, beneficiary input and control over their own content is not institutionalised throughout the aid chain. Both donors and CSOs retain control over whose voices are distributed and represented within institutional ICT channels. Publishing positive accounts, such as the Changing Lives articles, may seem harmless. However, it is still important to institutionalise more robust privacy considerations with beneficiaries in a participatory manner. Taylor *et al.* (2014) argued that digital data shines a "bright light" on beneficiaries, and the consequences of this may not be fully known. It is not ethical to view Ebrahim's (2003a) first level of participation (public consultation of informational resources) as sufficient in ICT contexts for this reason. My research supports Taylor *et al.*'s (2014) suggestion that ethical review procedures should be established for use by both donors and CSOs could utilise to consistently work through digital information issues. Much more needs to be done to enable higher levels of engagement and participation through ICT, and to ensure that the privacy and ethical responsibilities donors and CSOs have towards beneficiaries are institutionalised.

Accountability through learning about organisational practice

Another prominent aspect of the contributions of ICT to accountability is through organisational learning. Indeed some organisations have been the subject of research to understand their innovative use of learning and accountability systems (David, Mancini and Guijt, 2006; Jacobs and Wilford, 2010). ICT has often been viewed as a means to support all levels of learning about organisational practice (Guzmán, 2007; Klabbers and Kruiderink, 2007), increasing organisational capacity and thus contributing towards an organisation's mission (Ebrahim, 2007; Anheier, 2014). The internal needs of the organisation are thus often emphasised (Powell, 2006), based on the assumption that improving organisational practice will lead to development impact.

It is an unrealistic assumption that ICT use alone, without taking a holistic view of the development aid relationship context, will drastically improve CSO learning. On the contrary, Gender Links harnessed ICT to execute specific forms of learning phenomenally well in comparison to the other CSOs and donors. Here, management's functional ICT strategies facilitated targeted organisational learning objectives. Yet, my research found that there were other ICT practices that yielded significant learning and accountability effects. Gender Links' core reporting practices did not reduce pressure or improve workflows so that practitioners could spend more time learning about practice. Accordingly, my research supports the conclusion that examining one tool or functionality will not adequately inform the effects of ICT on learning and accountability. Hence, my research confirms Orlikowski's (2000) arguments that examining ICT practices gives more detailed understandings of organisational learning by situating learning within the accountability context.

Furthermore, it seems increasingly unrealistic to assume that donors and CSOs have the capacities and resources to select appropriate ICT infrastructure. ICT systems seem to be unresponsive, difficult, and improbable tools to aid learning about practice. Much research focuses on improving knowledge sharing through ICT (*i.e.* Guzmán, 2007; Maron and Maron, 2007; Janes *et al.*, 2014) but does not factor in the full range of organisational learning needs or the constitutive entanglement of ICT in organisational contexts. Cloud computing literature focuses on the advantages of reducing managerial effort and costs (Boss *et al.*, 2007; Venters and Whitley, 2012), whilst organisational studies literature is concerned with selection and implementation issues of institutional systems (Baptista, 2009; Strong and Volkoff, 2010). These discourses seemed to have influenced organisational ICT choices in Case Study 1, but they did not help managers effectively to understand the underlying ICT, learning and accountability problems observed. For Gender Links, the underlying premise of the enterprise system as a cost-cutting and managerial-effort saving venture further

entrenched ICT practices to become more internally focused. This was likewise true for the donor practitioners. The embedding of staff within such ICT environments facilitates internalising disjointed, separate ways in which learning about practice and learning from beneficiaries is performed. My research argues that ICTs need to be seen not only in terms of costs, functionalities and implementation, but also as participation contexts in order to obtain better assessments of ICT for learning and accountability.

In contrast, Crossroads, La Colombe and GAC did not actively seek to leverage technology to improve on learning about organisational practice, quite simply because there was insufficient access to the technologies to make this a sensible use of time, although this may well change in the future if the enabling environment in Togo improves. Crossroads' trusting, people-centred approach to knowledge gathering and learning largely reinforced the actors' positions, and facilitated La Colombe in remaining as opaque as possible. Wenger, White, and Snyder's (2009) concept of digital stewardship is one of the only theories to address the emergence of ICT in collaborative processes. However, Case Study 2 highlights a different perspective on ICT emergence. The actors did not typically engage with ICT, and were not aware of the multi-faceted and political concerns underpinning ICT use. My research highlighted how both constructive and disruptive lenses of organisational learning through structural integration enabled greater understanding of the contributions of ICT in this case.

Accountability through development learning

A central claim within much development discourse is that "the spread of information and communications technology and global interconnectedness has great potential to accelerate human progress, to bridge the digital divide and to develop knowledge societies" (United Nations, 2015, p.5). The claim is that ICTs can be put to use for

learning about what works well, enabling better decision-making and thus effective use of resources to strengthen accountability (Gray *et al.*, 2009; UN Global Pulse, 2012; Taylor *et al.,* 2014). This is particularly true at the macro-level because many of the social learning mechanisms within relationships are omitted from aggregated perspectives. However, this macro-level view of ICT for development learning tends to neglect situated ICT practices, interpretive/practice-based needs, and the accountability context which governs practice. It also neglects the potential contributions of ICT to downwards accountability. Furthermore, it disregards the technological environment within which the actors are embedded. It is very important to consider these dimensions in order to understand how development learning at the macro-level will be generated through CSO development. Although my research did not examine all donor contributions to development learning, both case studies reflected this understanding of ICT for development learning and sought to generate macro-level understandings by comparing and aggregating CSO reports. The cases had different approaches and struggles with their enacted processes.

Over the past decade, complexity science, structurally integrative learning and the participatory Web have shifted the discourse to a more responsive, possible and just theoretical basis for development learning (Eyben, 2005; Thompson, 2008; Ramalingam, 2013). However, there has been a broader failure within development aid relationships to construct and provide the ICT access, skills and environments needed to overcome the current results-based management orthodoxy. The GTF case study showed how fallible unprepared actors are in carrying out emergent learning processes, which spurred more significant accountability problems to take priority. Furthermore, my research supports King and McGrath's (2013) view that donor institutions are focused primarily on internal learning needs, such as DFID's project database and GAC results-by-country tool. These technological tools are driven by donors' internal accountability concerns to respond to information requests,

to provide case studies as public relations tools, or to point staff to relevant lessons learnt, rather than by considering how these tools might support practitioners' development learning and responsiveness towards CSOs. However, it was not clear that these ICTs contributed to exogenous development thinking. Rather, it exhibits that accountability for its own sake continues to be the lead concern, which often marginalises the benefits of development learning (Hulme and Edwards, 2013).

Moreover, my research does not support the view that simply adding more interpretive/practice-based learning strategies through ICT (*i.e.* more communities of practice) will counter development learning deficiencies at the macro level. Most of the decision-making in donor-CSO relationships continues to be strategic and political. Both case studies demonstrated technical/managerial ICT practices for reporting, whilst interpretive/practice-based ICT practices occurred in the context of implementation. It is clear that ICTs have an important role to play in collecting and analysing information, and coordinating activities, but it is also clear that development learning depends on the situated agency of actors to engage with this information throughout the aid chain. If donors and CSOs truly wish to use ICTs to improve development learning, there is a need to move beyond the siloed use of ICTs within organisational clouds, to develop ICTs based on more collaborative, integrative systemic frameworks. Restakis *et al.* (2015, n.p.) viewed effective ICT environments as "a hybrid structure, a shared space, in which the operations, capacities, and cultures of both domains are transformed and reconstituted through the application of open and shared knowledge." My research indicates that a radical shift towards this vision for ICT is warranted. Much more can be done to enable actors to use ICT to share, listen, learn and apply knowledge across contexts. Specific suggestions are outlined in Sub-Section 10.2.3.

10.1.3   Why these roles and practices of ICT have taken root

The above ICT roles and their associated learning and accountability meanings and practices are enacted in significantly different social, cultural and institutional contexts. In my research, these contexts are situated within a development aid system, where donors and CSOs meet on contentious, yet mutually advantageous terms. These relationships are characterised by asymmetrical power relations, in which the primacy of the upwards accountability relationship influences how learning and accountability works (Edwards and Hulme, 1995). Both donors and CSOs are parts of a system influenced by aid effectiveness and managerial discourses (Mawdsley, Savage and Kim, 2014). The widespread tendency is for practitioners to focus efforts on increasing efficiency and effectiveness in a shrinking budget atmosphere (Riddell, 2007). Adopting results-based management and business case ideas is the most widely accepted way to do this. The discourses on the contributions of ICT have primarily fit within this overarching narrative which suggests that ICTs promise to deliver more development results for less money, without compromise.

Simultaneously, CSO approaches to development also emerge in their own, specific contexts. Empowerment and social change rhetoric were clear guiding forces establishing values and beliefs across both case studies, yet CSO development approaches differed significantly from Chambers' (1997) or Pearce's (2010) ideals. ICTs were likewise instrumentally and fundamentally important to learning and accountability in drastically different ways. However, the actors' ICT practices were influenced primarily by the systemic and structural asymmetrical power relations that are inherent to the relationships between donors and CSOs. Within these relationships ICT adoption responded primarily to technical/managerial needs.

The dominance of technical/managerial systems of knowing and doing as a frame for ICT adoption establishes the affordances of ICT in particular functional,

fiscally-responsible ways. As discussed in the previous sections, the technical/managerial system is premised on the belief that development can be planned and monitored in a stable, continuous manner, leading eventually to conclusions about whether what has been done was done, and done effectively. Interpretive/practice-based approaches are also too emergent and problematic in predicting precisely what ICT tools and functionalities are needed. The notion that corporate ICT tools must be the only reliable option, which also comes at the attractive *zero* cost for CSOs, solidifies what the correct ICT choice should be. Selecting and adopting ICT on these terms, however, outlines a clear vision for learning and accountability because it establishes pre-defined practice norms that are built into technologies, and set the framework within which CSOs can manoeuvre.

Structurally, the dependency relationship between donors and CSOs also affected the dominant ICT strategies enacted. ICTs are increasingly co-opted to legitimate the actors in their struggles for organisational survival or due diligence. Both donors and CSOs harnessed ICT practices to mirror established ideas and practices stemming from development aid norms and realities. This happened not only in the way in which the GTF reverted to tested methods, but also in Gender Links' editorial control over the voices of its beneficiaries on its website. Legitimating ICT practices entrenched its main application to fulfil duties to report on their use of development funds and to compile certain kinds of evidence. In contrast, the rather stable dependency relationship between Crossroads and GAC showed the reverse. Here, Crossroads' preference to enact its development approach as it has in the past blinded the actors from engaging critically in their ICT practice. In this sense, there are numerous and embedded ways in which ICT reflects the dependency relationship.

Another structural element emerging mainly in the first case relates to the pace and focus of development work, which is driven by four main pressures. First,

there are pressures emanating from the UK public to use funds responsibly, thus reducing the involvement of UK civil servants. Second, there was the pressure emanating from the GTF mid-term evaluation that created a sense of urgency to put pressure on the CSOs to turn their programmes around and produce results more rapidly. Third, is the pressure that Gender Links puts on its staff to go above and beyond their duties to meet unrealistic targets. Fourth, pre-determined events, such as the Summits, and Campaigns that carry their advocacy and awareness-raising platforms likewise build pressure to meet deadlines. All of these pressures combined, focused development work on production, facilitated by productivity-based ICTs, rather than the people-focused aspect of development, facilitated by communication and participation-based ICTs.

The above observations are amenable to power-related interpretations. Individual staff may have the inter-cultural awareness and local understanding, but lack the power to change the high-pressure environment. This prevalent condition portrays the deep deficiency of the development aid relationship structure which catalyses a rigid sense of responsibility and productivity. ICTs are powerful tools of control because they facilitate staff surveillance and lead managers to disseminate organisational protocol. Moreover, ICTs reify what knowledge is important in the context of development work, which ends up excluding the vast majority of intended beneficiaries due to the format and language of this knowledge. ICT also enables these institutions to instrumentalise the voices of beneficiaries in global, public fora. The power-related viewpoint of accountability facilitated the identification of decision-making, control, and representation issues within ICT contexts which contradicts empowerment ideals.

The above indicates a rather pessimistic framing of how and why ICT contributes to learning and accountability. However, there were also more positive examples of the nuanced ways in which ICTs were articulated. The next sub-section

therefore summarises the interactions between roles, practices and meanings of ICT as a means to highlight opportunities for positive change.

10.1.4   Summary: revisiting the relationship and representation problems

The above cross-case analysis supports the conclusion that the contributions of ICT to learning and accountability are typically disempowering in practice. Figure 10-2 summarises the dominant influences that guide the actors' ICT choices. Whilst a range of development aid conditions influence ICT choices, there were also external influences, such as, local communication patterns, ICT infrastructure, and the viability of ICT in terms of its affordances and financial costs. There is thus an interaction that displaces the outer-level influences considerably across both cases. These findings underscore a need to shift the meanings and practices of ICT in development aid relationships. Rather than emphasising disempowering ICT realities within relationship and institutional contexts, my contribution focuses instead on enabling actors to operate at the interface of transformative action. Orlikowski's (2000) practice lens emphasises that ICTs are socially constructed, and can be used by actors to reshape power relations and organisational contexts, as much as the actors are shaped by using them. It is then a question of shifting the discourses surrounding ICT to locate this potential for positive critical engagement. Thus, I begin by summarising the empirical contributions according to the relationship and representation accountability problems, and then summarise the alternative discourses suggested by my research.

Figure 10-2 A summary of influences on ICT choices
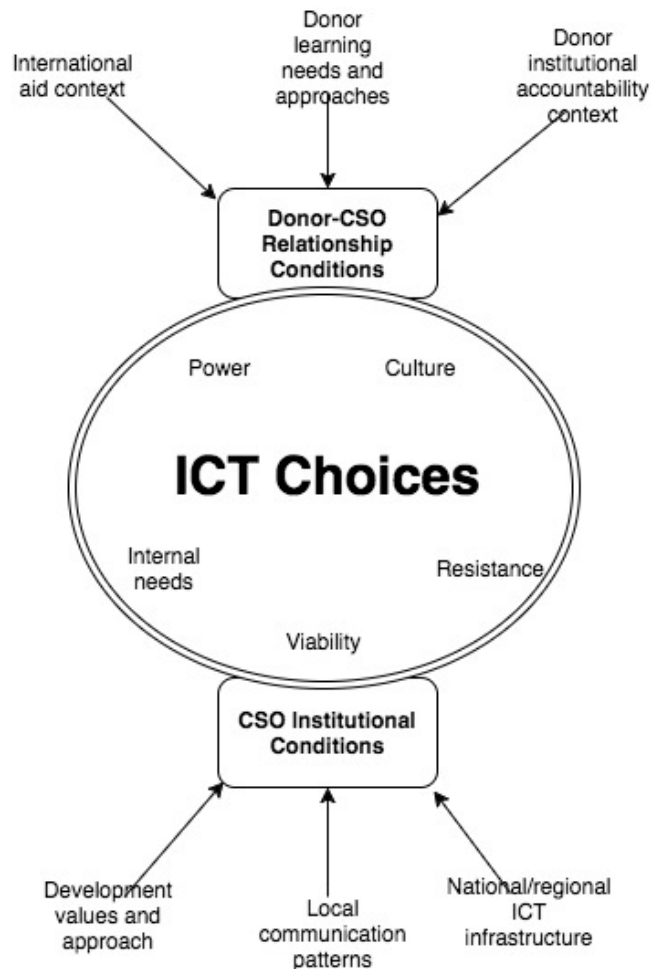
Source: Author.

Too much upwards accountability can be a hindrance for CSO development (Wallace, 1999; Edwards and Hulme, 1995). Much of the literature on how to ease the relationship accountability problem has focused on accountability mechanisms, such as evaluations, that directly connect donors to CSOs (Ebrahim, 2007; Patton, 2008; Riddell, 2009). Within the aid effectiveness approach, evaluation (or reporting) can incur negative impacts on relationships and reduce the likelihood that evaluations will be for learning purposes (Ebrahim, 2007). However, in my research, upwards accountability was a main feature *within* CSOs, not just *between* donors and CSOs, because the controllability dimension of accountability was emphasised. Decisions over the adoption or avoidance of ICT supported this accountability purpose. In both

cases, ICT was used to strengthen the organisations' position within the development aid relationship. On the one hand, ICT enabled Gender Links to demonstrate its legitimacy as a responsible actor, capable of producing results efficiently. On the other hand, La Colombe's avoidance of ICT enabled it to shirk concerns raised by volunteers, thus maintaining their relationship with Crossroads without sanctions. Neither of these outcomes changed the fundamental development aid context within which Gender Links and La Colombe operate.

The findings therefore suggest a need to change ICT orientations to facilitate development processes rather than workflows. Relationships are composed of long and complex chains of actors and decision-makers, but ICT does not yet facilitate exposing these relationship dynamics. When relying on ICT to communicate across contexts, it has become increasingly difficult to hold specific actors to account regarding improper actions or defective management, and individuals are feeling less and less connected to development practice on the ground. Chapter 9 demonstrated some evidence that ICT can introduce alternative channels within which real-time learning, expressions of dissent and power decentralisation can be nurtured. This seed of opportunity could be expanded by building on Bovens' (1998) claim that systems of multiple advocacy could bring about independent analysis of processes and procedure by actors across the aid chain. This would ensure that there would be multiple perspectives on policymaking options, and allowing different points of view to be recorded and debated. Thus far, conceptualisations of feedback channels in development aid relationships seem overly focused on service-oriented results (Gigler *et al.*, 2014), which is emblematic of the productivity focus, rather than development processes.

Turning to the representation accountability problem. Assessing the contributions of ICT to the representation problem is a greater challenge given the vastly different development approaches and contexts observed. A glaring feature of

my empirical evidence is the lack of ICT used in engaging with the beneficiaries with whom the CSOs were meant to be serving. Organisational rhetoric often focused on helping poor and marginalised people, but it was not clear in my case studies how CSOs actually defined or targeted poor and marginalised people. I was never given clear answers to my questions about the extent of poverty or marginalisation in the Mozambican regions or in the rural prefecture of Vo, Togo. Furthermore, data collected by Gender Links sought to represent the views of citizen populations, or it focused on institutional progress. For La Colombe, it was just assumed that girls in this area were vulnerable due to poverty, because everyone was poor. Some exceptions, whilst apparent to staff, were difficult to elicit, and I never gained a clear answer to my questions about their categorisations. Thus, ICT seems to be failing the most basic task within the representation accountability problem, because it is not being used to make explicit the tacit understandings of not only *how* or *how much,* but *who* CSOs are helping and *why*.

Despite this fundamental concern, ICTs have indeed increased the scale and capacity of Gender Links. Nevertheless, there were also worrying findings related to beneficiary engagement through ICT. The initial concern regarding the representation accountability problem regards the increasing amounts of time practitioners spend making plans, and less time working with people. My research shows that even when ICTs are used to report on practice thoroughly and efficiently, it comes at a significant cost. Yet, there were always actors attempting to realign, repurpose and resist dominating meanings and practices of ICT. For myself, debating the contentious aspects of the Changing Lives articles discussed in Sub-Section 5.3.2 best illustrates that for every dominating practice, there were people who objected. However, reifying this objection into structural integration through ICT did not ever follow. Thus, my research agrees with Banks *et al.* (2015), and Gaventa (2005) who take a normative stance on affording citizenship rights within CSOs. My research adds that within ICT

environments, there is a need to address privacy and security, as Waugaman (2016) suggests.

10.2 Contributions to theory and practice

10.2.1 Contributions to theory

This thesis primarily shows how and why the contributions of ICT to learning and accountability can be better understood by drawing on insights from CSO development and accountability literatures. In the introduction and conceptual framework chapters, the relationship and representation problems outlined concerns regarding the dominance of upwards accountability relationships, and the illusive, idealised notion of downwards accountability. This thesis takes a critical view of ICTs to contemplate how and why they reinforce the status quo between donors, CSOs and their beneficiaries through *learning* and *accountability*.

Currently, a host of academic enclaves tackle similar problems within the CSO development sphere, but exhibit significant differences in theoretical and methodological approaches. Within the small number of articles that treat ICT in CSO development (Nugroho, 2008; Saeed, Rohde and Wulf, 2008; Pillay and Maharaj, 2014), few take holistic, situated views of ICTs in context. Instead the tendency is to focus on a new tool that in some way serves to meet a specific functionality (Pillay and Maharaj, 2014), which simply lacks scope and relevance. ICT researchers often lack the contextual and theoretical grounding to navigate competing and powerful interests at play, and the application of accountability theory (Section 2.3) and learning theory (Section 2.5) helps to advance the conceptual understanding of ICT. These theoretical foundations reveal gaps in what is currently being emphasised in the ICT4D literature, and which future areas of research are desperately needed.

Structural aspects and mindsets are not likely to be transformed by a single revolutionary technology or functionality.

These ICT-focused literatures are contrasted by development studies literatures (Roper and Pettit, 2002; Ebrahim, 2003a; David, Mancini and Guijt, 2006), which only incidentally mention ICT in learning and accountability. Yet, ICT is clearly used to construct systems and structures that these studies and theories explore. This neglect is further exacerbated by the narrow scope, in which CSO issues and dependencies are problematised without involving donors in the research. Development studies literatures have contributed important framings surrounding collecting feedback, participatory monitoring and evaluation, and democratic governance within CSOs, which have not been adequately connected to wider ICT issues (Gaventa, 2005; Adams and Garbutt, 2008; Jacobs and Wilford, 2010). My contribution in this regard, has been to show the importance of applying learning, accountability and ICT conceptual foundations as mutually constitutive, and as both instrumentally and fundamentally important. Connecting ICTs to accountability debates prompts a discussion on whose interests are prioritised, akin to Jordan's (2007) approach, which seeks to clarify stakeholders, responsibilities and appropriate accountability mechanisms. This is important because my empirical evidence demonstrates how rigid ICT structures can be, and that ICTs' effects on learning and accountability are not usually considered before implementation.

Differentiating the links between learning and accountability was also particularly helpful for demonstrating interactions between individual, organisational and relationship levels. My research highlights the value of making the links between learning and accountability explicit. This enables a greater understanding of the socio-technical interactions, and highlights the failure of functionalist ICT role orientations. Furthermore, learning is regularly theorised in support of accountability (*i.e* Ebrahim, 2007; Gray *et al.*, 2009), yet, my research demonstrated that situated

accountability practices were usually a much stronger influence over the form and purpose of learning than vice versa. ICT was a significant manner of control in this regard. Thus, positive and negative effects of ICT come to light by examining learning through both the situated and power-related lenses of accountability.

Addressing power dynamics in learning and accountability processes draws attention to ICT inequalities. Empowerment and participatory governance theory (Friedman, 1992; Cornwall, 2005; Gaventa, 2005) provides a valuable way to increase our understanding of the interactions between ICT environments, ICT practices and power dynamics that shape learning and accountability. Thus, another contribution of this thesis is its engagement with ICT as a participation context. This facilitated understanding the ways in which actors rationalised and enacted ICTs for downwards accountability. Thus, by applying notions of participation as a key accountability process mechanism, my research furthered our present knowledge of ICT affordances in this regard.

Lastly, my research contributes to the debate in ICT4D regarding the role of ICT for development and belongs to a growing number of qualitative and critical studies of ICT for development. Investigating the barriers and challenges to adopting one or another ICT often results in a continuous cycle of narrow-minded failure. This thesis shifts the discourse away from this tendency towards a view of ICTs as fundamentally shaping accountability and learning in the first place. It also argues strongly in favour of viewing ICTs as a means for actors to transform participation and practice contexts positively, rather than viewing ICTs as capable change agents alone.

10.2.2   Limitations

A key characteristic of critical interpretivism is to reflect on biases, weaknesses, and limitations of the research (McGrath, 2005). I focus here on the most salient

limitations that come to mind after reflection and review of my research concepts and practices.

One limitation of the thesis is its lack of engagement with the contributions to *development* made by the actors. In earlier versions of this thesis, I included a lengthy summary of the actors' positions and contributions to development, but it added little to the main arguments concerning learning and accountability. Moreover, given that I draw primarily on staff perspectives and situated practice, my empirical material does not sufficiently allow me to make judgements about wider development implications. We all have underlying beliefs that propel our views and contributions of development, which challenged me to consider the implications of this throughout the research process. Although I have included some reflections throughout the thesis, the main way in which I have confronted this struggle is through my engagement with theory.

Regarding my use of theory, focusing on accountability and learning theory across multiple disciplines was challenging, and it was not easy to combine the several different arguments in a focused way. My use of theory has been primarily drawn from development studies literatures and how this relates to the organisational and social theories from which many of the studies are founded. However, as Avgerou (2005) argues, developing critical perspectives of ICT in society requires several layers of theory, and on emphasising the interplay between theory and empirical evidence. The theories used enabled me to ground the research in themes and discourses familiar to the practitioners involved in the empirical study, facilitating engagement with the tensions and gaps between rhetoric and reality.

That being said, my intention to traverse the development aid relationships as a means to compare perspectives did not end up having as strong a revelatory effect for the practitioners as intended. The modelling activities were originally intended to

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be used to address specific practice-related problems, by facilitating comparison across contexts and perspectives. To respect the participants' feelings according to my ethical commitments to them, I did not coerce them to speak about specific people involved in their work and I did not encourage them to complete all of the activities if they did not want to. There were therefore missing pieces to the puzzle when it came to comparing perspectives. The participants also developed diverse interpretations of learning and accountability, even within the same organisation or development aid relationship. The perspective modelling activity would have been more useful for critical reflection had each participant considered all of the various actors and groups that are directly or indirectly involved in their work, and to review the main interpretations and concerns of others. In future, to get around the time constraints and sensitivity of the matter, participants could be instructed to do this activity independently. Once all of the activities are finished, and after they have seen how the perspective information is used, then they could choose to share their information with the researcher and others. The researcher could also offer anonymity for this information specifically. At the same time, the researcher should take into consideration the literacy level of the participants and their workload to determine if this modified strategy would be feasible.

If the process modelling activity had been done in teams or groups, the participants would also have had more of an opportunity to be involved in the analysis and evaluation of their processes. Team-based discussion could have also resulted in developing action-points to implement that would have benefited the participants and organisation more immediately. However, learning and accountability are too often conceptualised at an institutional level and providing an opportunity for different levels of staff to share their experiences and ideas with me individually was greatly appreciated and showed different facets of organisational life that would have otherwise not emerged.

10.2.3 Implications for future research and practice

My research findings point to a clear need to discuss *who* and *how* individuals are supported and included through ICT. This sub-section lays out five key areas to guide discussion, policy and practice in this area. Unfortunately, it is unlikely that ICTs will contribute to resolving the relationship and representation problems substantively at present because there are two parallel factors that need to be addressed. First, relationships between donors and CSOs are currently conceptualised and enacted primarily in terms of results-based contracts between them. A host of research has contributed significant evidence of the deficiencies of this mode of development management (Wallace, 1999; Easterly, 2006; Ramalingam, 2013), yet the practice grows deeper and more ingrained. Contractual relationships focused on development outcomes are ill-equipped to resolve inequalities in Internet and electricity infrastructure. When ICTs are conceptualised as an institutional matter, power to access reliable and effective tools and infrastructures is constrained significantly.

Second, managerial practice and reverence were significant impediments across cases. Many of the benefits for learning and accountability through ICT suggested within the literature are contingent on managers delegating more power to staff and beneficiaries effectively and consistently. Likewise, accommodating marginalised perspectives requires support and education that CSO staff were not rewarded for. Neglecting the educational and support needs of staff will only increase the digital divide and further inhibit initiatives to accommodate marginalised perspectives.

My findings nevertheless suggest five areas for constructive reform:

1. **Formalising integrative knowing and doing**

The research demonstrated a need to chronicle *how* learning takes place between the actors through the use of ICT. In the case of relationships between CSOs and beneficiaries, there is a serious lack of ICTs to enable shifts between social learning and technical learning processes as well as between downwards and upwards accountability. Conceptually, integrated and evolutionary knowledge and practice models have existed for quite some time, yet, knowledge sharing technologies like electronic documents predominately facilitate one final view of outcomes. My quest to influence donors and CSOs to adopt better technologies for this purpose was nevertheless only partially successful. A review of technologies that exist to facilitate better integrated feedback, meta-data generation, sectoral information management and evolutionary analysis over time is still needed.

2. **Delegating and supporting collective analysis**

There is a clear need to redress the separation between learning on the job, and reporting on development outcomes. My research pointed to a need to debate ideas about knowledge construction and how different actors contribute to transforming descriptive activities (such as learning on the job) into analysis for both donor and CSO staff. As Ebrahim and Rangan (2010) argued, flexibility is a necessary stepping stone to designing better learning systems that support accountability. A key opportunity moving forward is to investigate the use ICT for collective analysis, rather than a transmission-based workflow.

3. **Streamlining and opening up**

Currently, enormous amounts of development resources are wasted on recycling information into different document formats. Likewise, hoarding project documentation is detrimental to building trusting development aid relationships and sharing examples of good practice. There is no technical reason why reporting cannot be streamlined, for institutions and across donors, even for the most marginalised CSOs. Donors

must let go of their proprietary formats in favour of querying organisational data to meet their reporting requirements. Future research and development is needed to recognise the benefits of committing to common information sharing practices that benefit wider uses (comparison, debate, cross-fertilisation and deconstruction) than simply aggregating aid flows.

4. Engaging all actors involved

There were no observed or reported processes to consult or engage CSOs or their beneficiaries in how development information is used online. Whilst I argue for an increasing emphasis on ICT for collective analysis and information sharing, this also increases the likelihood that nefarious uses of ICTs will occur. There is an urgent need to develop institutionalised processes between donors and CSOs to address security and ethical concerns. This requires the development of an educational process, and continued commitment to identifying and providing for information needs of all actors involved.

5. Establishing clear pathways to participation in ICT contexts

In cases where there are barriers to involving all actors equitably, long-term plans that establish how and why actors will increasingly develop the skills, access to infrastructure and commitment to contribute are also necessary. This information should be publicly available. In conjunction with the above, providing educational opportunities to help beneficiaries understand their rights, how and where information is stored about them, and how to contribute and engage in meaningful learning and accountability processes within ICT contexts is a pervasive need.

10.4 Concluding remarks

This research was born out of a desire to understand why ICTs were not making the expected transformations in inter-organisational learning processes whilst working for Crossroads from 2007 to 2010 (Bentley, 2011). What I perceived initially to be a problem with strict accountability requirements that could easily be *solved* with new and innovative ICTs turned out to be a result of many inter-locking structural issues that are experienced in diverse ways by various actors within development aid relationships. It was satisfying to find confirmation that certain accountability requirements were increasingly burdensome to nearly all of the research participants. However, I needed to confront preconceived ideas regarding the association between learning and accountability. For example, I encountered different interpretations of both learning and accountability in the research, which indicates that there can be no singular solution to a general accountability problem by improving *learning* processes.

It was challenging to identify fulfilling responses to such a situation, partly due to the attempts to compare so many perspectives between two very different case studies that embody different development approaches. At the same time, both case studies displayed symptoms of similar learning and accountability problems, yet with different and difficult to pinpoint root causes. In this sense, the structural qualities of the relationships examined indicated a great deal of complexity and variation whilst still showing similar characteristics. In the light of these unchanging qualities of development aid relationships, I drew inspiration from critical researchers who intend to contribute towards social transformation. Future research must indeed explore the connective tissues that draw these unchanging systems towards equitable and enlightening possibilities to connect, debate and progress with each other collaboratively.

This thesis has sought to contribute to knowledge by combining insights from development, ICT and organisation studies literatures, which have not previously been applied holistically to development aid relationships between donors and CSOs. It offers a conceptual framework that shows how the contributions of ICTs to learning and accountability can be better understood and theorised. Despite changes in the development aid landscape, donor-CSO relationships do not seem to be diminishing in importance. My research helps us to understand whether ICTs are contributing positively to addressing key power-related issues within these relationships. ICTs could make important contributions to their work, yet ICT inequalities and widening gaps between the ICT practices of donors, CSOs and beneficiaries may hinder development progress, and therefore need addressing.

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Appendix 1

INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS – EXPLORATORY STUDY

Time of interview:

Date:

Place/Mode:

Interviewer:

Interviewee:

Consent

Review conditions of participation, and ask if there are questions or concerns about the consent form. If not signed yet, ask them to sign and transfer before beginning the interview.

General Questions

Let's begin by speaking about your organisation.

- How many employees does your organisation have?

    o Full Time____

    o Part Time____

    o Volunteer____

    o Casual____

    o Other: Specify _____

- Which countries does your organisation work in? Why?

- What themes or sectors does your organisation focus on/work in? Why?

I have read about your organisation online, I was wondering if you could you please summarise briefly how your organisation's focus (goals, mission, values, etc.) have changed over time, i.e. have these aspects remained stable in the past 5, 10, 15 years, or has your organisation undergone transformations? If so why?

Could you please speak briefly about your organisation's approach to development?

Establishing Relationships

Why does your organisation seek funds from external bodies?

- Who does your organisation receive funding from?

- Could you provide an estimate of the breakdown of overall revenue streams?

  o Multilateral

  o Bilateral

  o Private Foundation

  o Private donors

  o International NGOs

  o Membership

  o Product Sales

  o Services

o   Other: Specify

If your organisation receives funding from bilateral donors (list examples of donors based on country of organisation)?

- Which one(s)?

- What is the name of the funding programme/fund/Call for proposal? (Provide examples based on identified donor) – List all per donor

- How long have you had a funding relationship with these donors? List all

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Please take me through, step-by-step, how your CSO applied for the above-mentioned funds?

- Is there anything you would change in this process in the future?

Please provide examples of a time when were/were not successful and help me understand why?

- Successful:

- Unsuccessful:

How did you communicate with the donor during the application/negotiation process?

For example, what clarifications were requested and how, what information did they

provide about your application, did you speak to someone at the donor organisation, and for what purpose, etc.
What information and communication technologies did you use to establish relationships with bilateral donors and why?   *For example, their website, email, discussion lists, telephone, videoconference, VoIP, etc.*
What are the biggest challenges/issues that your organisation faces in establishing relationships with bilateral donors and why?

Working Together

What were the conditions of the relationship with donors, and how were these determined? List for all.
How did your organization establish reporting requirements for/with donors? • How have reporting requirements changed over the past [5, 10, 15] years?
Please take me through the typical process of managing an ongoing project or programme?

- What is your organisation's role in managing the project? Why?

- What is the role of the bilateral donor in managing the project from your perspective? Why?

How does your organization communicate with donors during projects or programmes?

For example, are there arrangements for field visits, email communication, telephone conversations, mid-term reports etc.? Can you give a few specific examples?

How did you communicate with the donor during the ongoing management of the project/programme?

What information and communication technologies did you use to carry out your project/programme work and why?

What are the biggest challenges/issues that your organisation faces in carrying out work funded by bilateral donors and why?

Learning and Knowledge Sharing

What forms of learning and/or knowledge sharing are most valuable to your organisation and why?

- What do you consider to be the purpose of learning and/or knowledge sharing within your organisation?

- Please provide a specific example of how your organisation learns from experience?

Do you have any knowledge sharing and/or learning programmes set-up amongst or between your organization and donors?

• How useful or successful are these arrangements?

What technologies do you use for learning and/or knowledge sharing, and why?

What are the biggest challenges/issues that your organisation faces in learning and knowledge sharing?

Technology

Clarify the meaning of technology drawing from previous answers, i.e. ICTs In considering the projects or programmes we have spoken about in this interview, can you provide an example of when technology became a hindrance to your organisation's goals? Why was this so?
An example of when technology was successful/useful? Why was this so?
What general attitudes do you confront within your organisation relating to technology?   What about from the bilateral donor?

What are the biggest challenges/issues that your organisation faces in relation to information and communications technology?
For example, cost, utility, capacities, training, design, knowledge, etc.

Additional Comments

Do you have any additional comments about any of the topics we have discussed today?

Thank you for your time!

Appendix 2

INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR DONOR REPRESENTATIVES – EXPLORATORY STUDY

Time of interview:

Date:

Place/Mode:

Interviewer:

Interviewee:

Consent

Review conditions of participation, and ask if there are questions or concerns about the consent form. If not signed yet, ask them to sign and transfer before beginning the interview.

General Questions

Let's begin by speaking about your organization, and the relationships it has, and have had, with civil society organizations.

- (Verify if information was found on website, cut and paste here, otherwise ask) How is your organization structured to work with CSOs? In other words, is there a particular department, programme, or team that deals with CSOs, or is this function spread over the organization? Why?

- (Verify if information found on website and cut and paste sectors)What themes or sectors does your organisation focus on in which CSOs are involved? Why?

Could you please speak briefly about your organisation's approach to development? (Cut and paste mission statement/definitions of development from website to begin elaboration)

Why does your organisation give funds to CSOs? Have the reasons changed over time as well? Why?

Establishing Relationships

Please comment on the various ways or modalities (through Calls for proposals, specific funds, partnership programmes, etc.) that CSOs have access to funding from your organization? (List all programmes listed on website and verify or add to here).

What would you say is the overall importance of funding arrangements with CSOs to your organisational mission. For example, what would be the consequence to your organisation if your organization stopped all funding to CSOs?

Please take me through, step-by-step, the procedures that a CSO is likely to follow in

order to establish a funding arrangement with your organization? (Collect information from website to verify and comment)

- Is there anything you would like to see change in this process in the future?

How does your organisation communicate with the CSO during the application/negotiation process?
For example, what clarifications were requested and how, what information did they provide about your application, did you speak to someone at the donor organisation, and for what purpose, etc.
What information and communication technologies do you use to establish relationships with CSOs and why?
For example, internal systems, their website, email, discussion lists, telephone, videoconference, VoIP, etc.
What are the biggest challenges/issues that your organisation faces in establishing relationships with CSOs and why?

Working Together

Please take me through the typical process of managing or implementing an ongoing project or programme? You may begin by speaking in broad terms, then giving examples if general procedures are difficult to speak of. Please comment on your organisation's role in the management and implementation process of a project or programme.

- What is the role of the CSO in managing the project/programme from your perspective? Why?

How does your organization establish reporting requirements for/with CSOs? Please compare and contrast reporting requirements of CSOs.

- What reporting requirements does your organization face? Why?

- How have reporting requirements changed over the past [5, 10, 15] years?

How does your organization communicate with CSOs during projects or programmes?
For example, are there arrangements for field visits, email communication, telephone conversations, mid-term reports etc.? Can you give a few specific examples?
What information and communication technologies did you use to carry out your project/programme work and why?
What are the biggest challenges/issues that your organisation faces in seeing through the implementation of projects/programmes and why?

Learning and Knowledge Sharing

What forms of learning and/or knowledge sharing are most valuable to your organisation and why?
• What do you consider to be the purpose of learning and/or knowledge sharing within your organisation?
• Please provide a specific example of how your organisation learns from

experience?

Do you have any knowledge sharing and/or learning programmes set-up amongst or between your organization and CSOs?   • How useful or successful are these arrangements? Why?

What technologies do you use for learning and/or knowledge sharing, and why?

What are the biggest challenges/issues that your organisation faces in learning and knowledge sharing?

Technology

Clarify the meaning of technology drawing from previous answers, i.e. ICTs What general attitudes do you confront within your organisation relating to technology? Why is this so?   What about from CSOs?

What are the biggest challenges/issues that your organisation faces in relation to information and communications technology?
For example, cost, utility, human resources, capacities, training, design, knowledge, etc.

Additional Comments

Do you have any additional comments about any of the topics we have discussed today?

Thank you for your time!

Appendix 3

CONSENT FORM FOR CSO REPRESENTATIVES – EXPLORATORY STUDY

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH PROJECT ON TECHNOLOGIES FOR LEARNING AND ACCOUNTABILITY

This is to state that I agree to participate in a program of research being conducted by Caitlin Bentley of the ICT4D Research Centre, Royal Holloway University of London, under the supervision of Professor Tim Unwin (tim.unwin@rhul.ac.uk; +44 (0)1784-443655).

A.   PURPOSE

The purpose of this study is to explore how technology mediates relationships between bilateral donors and civil society organisations in order to learn about how technologies, particularly information and communication technologies, can be improved better to support knowledge sharing and learning between them. By agreeing to participate in this study, you are helping the researcher to develop an understanding of the key issues and challenges of collaboration between these parties.

B.   PROCEDURES

I agree to participate in the study by participating in a 60-120 minute interview in which I will be asked about my own and my organisation's current and past practices relating to establishing, maintaining and evaluating relationships (funding relationships or otherwise) with bilateral donors; I will be asked about communicating and sharing knowledge with bilateral donors and specifically the challenges that my organisation faces in this regard; I will also be asked about attitudes and practices of technology use within this context. I understand that personal information (name and contact information) will not be associated with the answers I provide in the interview. I understand my organization will be named. However, because direct quotations may reveal aspects of my organisation, the researcher will contact me prior to publishing the report for my approval for the use of this quotation, or for the quotation to be anonymised. I will be aware that any answers provided will not be associated with my identity.

C. RISKS AND BENEFITS

If I agree to participate in this research project, I will do so knowing that the questions will relate to my knowledge, practices and behaviours in relation to my organisation's practice and experience working with bilateral donors. Should a question unexpectedly make me feel uncomfortable, I will be free to disregard that question or to withdraw altogether from the study without negative consequences. I will periodically be reminded of this during the interview.

D. CONDITIONS OF PARTICIPATION

• I understand that I am free to withdraw my consent and discontinue my participation in the study at any time without negative consequences.

• I understand that my participation in this study is CONFIDENTIAL (the researcher will know who I am, but will not disclose my identity).

• I understand that the data from this study may be published, but that I will be permitted to check any direct quotations before any such publication. I understand I will be given two weeks to respond before forfeiting my right to comment on my quotation.

I HAVE CAREFULLY STUDIED THE ABOVE AND UNDERSTAND THIS AGREEMENT. I FREELY CONSENT AND VOLUNTARILY AGREE TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS STUDY.

NAME   (please   print):
_____

SIGNATURE:
_____

Appendix 4

CONSENT FORM FOR DONOR REPRESENTATIVES – EXPLORATORY STUDY

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH PROJECT ON TECHNOLOGIES FOR LEARNING AND ACCOUNTABILITY

This is to state that I agree to participate in a program of research being conducted by Caitlin Bentley of the ICT4D Research Centre, Royal Holloway University of London, under the supervision of Professor Tim Unwin (tim.unwin@rhul.ac.uk; +44 (0)1784-443655).

A.   PURPOSE

The purpose of this study is to explore how technology mediates relationships between bilateral donors and civil society organisations in order to learn about how technologies, particularly information and communication technologies, can be improved to better support knowledge sharing and learning between them. By agreeing to participate in this study, you are helping the researcher to develop an understanding of the key issues and challenges of collaboration between these parties.

B.   PROCEDURES

I agree to participate in the study by participating in a 90 minute interview in which I will be asked about my institution's current and past practices relating to establishing, maintaining and evaluating relationships (funding relationships or otherwise) with Civil Society Organisations (CSOs); I will be asked about communicating and sharing knowledge with CSOs and specifically the challenges that my institution faces in this regard; I will also be asked about attitudes and practices of technology use within this context. I understand that personal information (name and contact information) will not be associated with the answers I provide in the interview. I understand my institution will be named. However, because direct quotations may reveal aspects of my institution, the researcher will contact me prior to publishing the report for my approval for the use of this quotation, or for it to be anonymised. I will be aware that any answers provided will not be associated with my identity.

C.   RISKS AND BENEFITS

If I agree to participate in this research project, I will do so knowing that the questions will relate to my knowledge, practices and behaviours in relation to my institution's practice and experience working with CSOs. Should a question unexpectedly make me feel uncomfortable, I will be free to disregard that question or to withdraw altogether from the study without negative consequences. I will periodically be reminded of this during the interview.

D.   CONDITIONS OF PARTICIPATION

· I understand that I am free to withdraw my consent and discontinue my participation in the study at any time without negative consequences.

· I understand that my participation in this study is CONFIDENTIAL (the researcher will know who I am, but will not disclose my identity).

· I understand that the data from this study may be published, but that I will be permitted to check any direct quotations before any such publication. I understand I will be given two weeks to respond before forfeiting my right to comment on my quotation.

I HAVE CAREFULLY STUDIED THE ABOVE AND UNDERSTAND THIS AGREEMENT. I FREELY CONSENT AND VOLUNTARILY AGREE TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS STUDY.

NAME (please print):

_____

SIGNATURE:

_____

Appendix 5

MONTHLY ETHNOGRAPHIC SNAPSHOT TEMPLATE

Date:

Overview:

What are the main events and activities that I participated during this time period?

Programme Elements

Learning Processes:

- What were the main purposes of learning? Why?
- Why did I need to learn? What was the goal of learning?
- What form of learning was used? Why?
- How did I progress? Why?
- What helped? Why?
- What was difficult? Why?
- What were the outcomes of learning? Why?
- Who did I need to collaborate with? Why?
- In what way does my learning process/approach differ from staff? Why?
- What attitudes about learning did I confront? Why?
- What was the role of ICT in learning processes? Why?

Accountability Processes:

- What were the main purposes of accountability? Why?
- What was the goal of accountability?
- What form did accountability take? Why?
- What were accountability outcomes? Why?
- Who did I need to collaborate with/who is responsible? Why?
- In what ways do my ideas about accountability differ from staff? Why?
- What attitudes about accountability did I confront? Why?
- What helped accountability? Why?
- What made accountability difficult? Why?
- What was the role of ICT and accountability processes? Why?

Concepts of the relationships between Learning and Accountability

- What makes learning different from accountability (& *vice versa*)? Why?
- What makes learning reinforce accountability? Why?
- When does learning and accountability collide? Why? How?
- What notions in practice are prioritised? Why?

- What are my thoughts about the relationship between learning and accountability? Why?
- What is the role of ICTs in the aforementioned relationships? Why?

Context Elements

ICT Resources:

- What ICTs were used and why?
- What was the frequency in which they were used? Why?
- What was the availability of the ICT? Why?
- What benefits occurred through the use of ICT? Why?
- What challenges did I confront through the use of ICT? Why?

Other Resources:

- What other resources were integral? Why?

Sectoral Learning:

- What did I learn about gender issues? Why?
- What practices are relevant for gender issues? Why?
- What goals or targets are used? Why?
- What are the challenges in this line of work? Why?
- What successes have happened? Why?

Internal/External Organisation Elements:

- Who within the organisation seems to be better or worse at learning within their work? Why?
- Who within the organisation seems to be better or worse at learning with outside offices or partners? Why?
- What accountability processes exist within the organisation? Why?
- Who is responsible for creating and managing control mechanisms? Why?
- What are the strengths and challenges of working with country offices and partners? Why?
- What is the role of ICT in facilitating or hindering organisational activities? Why?

Perspectives

Roles:

- Who did I encounter? For how long?
- What metaphors would I attribute them? Why?
- What are their aspirations? Why?

- What are their expectations? Why?
- What are their commitments? Why?
- What are their anxieties? Why?
- What are their capabilities? Why?

Self-monitoring:

- What metaphor would I attribute myself? Why?
- What is my aspiration why?
- What are my expectations? Why?
- What are my commitments? Why?
- What are my anxieties? Why?
- What are my capabilities? Why?
- How do I feel? How disciplined am I? How self accountable? Am I on top of things or am I overwhelmed and losing track? What can I leave out? What can I give up? Where could I get help?
- How are the relationships with my main reference persons [bosses, supervisor, coworkers,]? Who have been the main people to influence me in my work?
- How well am I managing my personal relationships?
- How well am I handling the interplay between participant observer and research?
- Are there any foreshadowed conflicts? Should I try to prevent them/keep out where should I enter and manage them? What are the foreseeable risks in the different scenarios?
- What assumptions have I confronted were uncovered? Why?
- What has surprised me the most? Why?
- What has saddened me the most? Why?

Generating data

- How rigorously am I tracking the process? How systematic am I?
- How appropriate is my methodology? Why? How could I improve it?
- How lucid am I being as a researcher? Am I sucked in by everyday life?
- How much pre-reading, real listening, re-watching, writing, reflecting am I doing?
- How good is the data and generating? How usable? How manageable? How fair the amount? Realistically will be will I be able to handle it?
- How well am I relating what I'm doing to what I've read in the literature?

Appendix 6

PARTICIPATORY MODELLING INTERVIEW GUIDE

Actor identification

Write the groups of people or names of people (if there is only one person, i.e. CEO) that are directly or indirectly involved or affected by your programme.
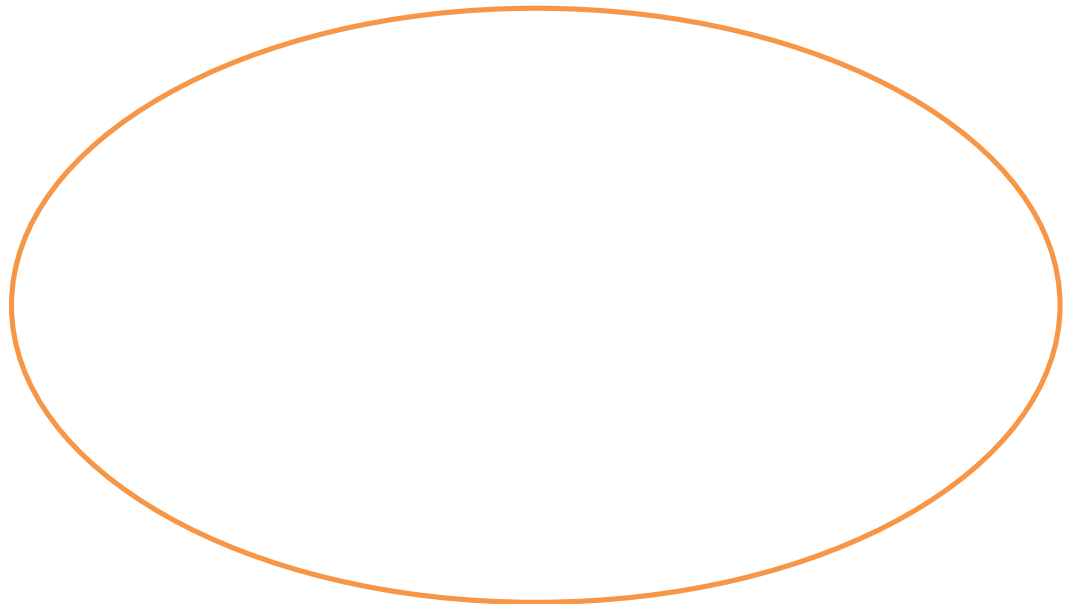
Why have you placed certain people/groups inside or outside of the circle?

MAXCAC

Name of person/group:
Metaphor:
Aspirations:
eXpectations:
Commitments:
Anxieties:
Capabilities:

<center>**Learning Processes**</center>

Individual Drawing

Draw a picture or a diagram of the way in which you learn within your role at work. This may involve, but is not limited to, the learning goals of your project or programme.

Think about:

- What you aim to achieve in relation to your role or programme.
- How do you learn about whether things are going well or going badly?
- How do you get information to know if things are going well or going badly? Where does this information come from?
- How do you know when you need to make a change? How would you do this?
- How do you know if you're doing a good job?

Discussion

- What are the social, cultural or political elements that impact the process?

  For example:

  - Norms: Everyone does it like this
  - Roles: I am supposed to do it like this
  - Values: it is important to do it like this

- What are the power-related aspects?

  For example:

  - Decision-making power: It is like this because I have/don't have the choice
  - Management structure: It is like this because that's the way the organisation is structured
  - Knowledge: It is like this because that's what we know
  - Information: It is like this because we have/lack information

- What is the role of ICTs?

  - What are the tools most frequently used and why?
    - Email
    - Telephone
    - SMS
    - Software
    - Skype
    - Internet (for research or other uses than already listed)
    - Other
  - What are the main frustrations with ICTs in your process?
  - Do you know of other possibilities that have not been experimented with?
  - Do you feel comfortable experimenting with ICTs?

<center>403</center>

- How do you evaluate your picture for:
  - Efficiency
  - Effectiveness
  - Ethics

Accountability Processes

Draw a picture or diagram about how you imagine accountability. There is no 'right' interpretation of accountability, so you may think about yourself and your responsibilities, accountability in terms of your programme, or the impact of the programme or organisation on society in all its diversity.

Individual Drawing

You can think about accountability broadly in terms of:

- Who are you directly and indirectly responsible to? Who are they responsible to? How?
- What determines whether your programme survives or whether it ends?
- Are there other partners or people that you are accountable to? How?
- How do you prioritise who to make happy? How? Why?
- Do other people involved prioritise things differently? How? Why?

Discussion

- What are the social, cultural or political elements that impact the process?

  For example:

  - Norms: Everyone does it like this
  - Roles: I am supposed to do it like this
  - Values: it is important to do it like this

- What are the power-related aspects?

  For example:

  - Decision-making power: It is like this because I have/don't have the choice
  - Management structure: It is like this because that's the way the organisation is structured
  - Knowledge: It is like this because that's what we know
  - Information: It is like this because we have/lack certain information

- What is the role of ICTs?
  - What are the tools most frequently used and why?
    - Email
    - Telephone
    - SMS
    - Software
    - Skype
    - Internet (for research or other uses than already listed)
    - Other
  - What are the main frustrations with ICTs in your process
  - Do you know of other possibilities that have not been experimented with?
  - Do you feel comfortable experimenting with ICTs?

- How do you evaluate your picture for:
  - Efficiency
  - Effectiveness
  - Ethics

Appendix 7

EXAMPLE MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING

Memorandum of Understanding

Regarding Research to Explore the Role of Technology in Mediating Relationships between Bilateral Donors and Civil Society Organisations

Parties

Gender Links, Headquarters at Johannesburg, South Africa; and Caitlin Bentley, PhD student at Royal Holloway, University of London.

Concerning

The opportunity for Caitlin Bentley to conduct research for her PhD study at Royal Holloway, University of London, in collaboration with Gender Links as a key partner, particularly focused on programmes funded by the Governance and Transparency Fund (GTF). This research aims to explore the role of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) in shaping and supporting relationships between bilateral donors and CSOs, particularly at the critical interface of knowledge sharing and learning in development policy and practice amongst these actors.

This study will contribute to Caitlin's key areas of enquiry that her thesis aims to address, namely:

1. To develop an understanding of knowledge and learning processes between and within bilateral donors and CSOs. Specific attention will be paid to monitoring and evaluation systems as they embody formal arrangements between donors and CSOs that greatly influence knowledge sharing and learning between them.

2. To explore how and why decisions are made based on the current funding structures. I am choosing to focus on decision-making in order to explore choices of donors and CSOs that may be in conflict with established knowledge and learning systems.

3. To investigate the role of technology in mediating the relationship between bilateral donors and CSOs, from a perspective that also wishes to examine how technologies can be improved within this context for the purpose of knowledge sharing and learning, eventually leading to increasing development impact and aid effectiveness.

Period of validity

December 2011 – August 2013

Activities

Although specific research activities are subject to negotiation, the following are a brief description of forthcoming activities, including those requested by Gender Links. Please note that the following list of activities includes those involving DFID and KPMG, but that agreements of their participation will be sought separately. The following list is to clarify Caitlin's intended overall research plan thus making this explicit to Gender Links.

(a) Preliminary phase

Caitlin conducted 17 interviews with bilateral donors and CSOs in the UK and in Canada in January 2012 regarding current and past practices relating to establishing, maintaining and evaluating relationships (funding relationships or otherwise); communicating and sharing knowledge, and the challenges that these organisations face in this regard; and lastly, attitudes and practices of technology use within this context. Although Caitlin has completed the preliminary phase already, she would like to conduct the same interview with Gender Links (a 60 minute interview) upon arrival in Johannesburg to begin mapping the challenges that Gender Links faces in particular.

(b) Exploratory enquiry phase

The exploratory enquiry phase entails delving deeper into the identified issues from the preliminary phase through qualitative case study research. This will involve:

(i) Interviews, participation and inventories

The purpose of the interviews and inventories are to develop unstructured descriptions of the programme, organisational contexts, environmental contexts, and technological infrastructures in place. Caitlin would like to participate in organisational day-to-day activities shadowing a staff-member for the first six weeks upon arrival.

(ii) Perspective Modeling

This activity engages participants to create descriptions of their role, expectations, aspirations, anxieties, and capabilities in connection to the programme and/or Caitlin's research themes. These will be used for discussion in later stages of the research. Caitlin would like to help key actors within the organisation do these on an individual basis.

(iii) Process Modeling

The next step is to begin constructing pictures of learning/knowledge sharing and accountability processes within Gender Links and between their donors with a focus on the GTF. How this will be done is subject to negotiation, whether it be an individual or group activity.

(iv) Discussion

The last activity involves examining and evaluating all of the information and findings collected and created to discuss together the possibilities of different ways of functioning, and to consider the outcomes of changing ways.

(v) Evaluating the Research Process

One aspect of Caitlin's research is to document her own learning and evolution of her research strategies. Participants may be asked for interviews to help evaluate the effectiveness of the research process.

(c) Follow-up phase

Caitlin would like to carry-out similar activities in a shorter amount of time (2 weeks to 1 month) at one or two country offices of Gender Links. Selection of these research sites would rely on analysis of the exploratory phase, and can therefore be selected after the first six weeks at Gender Links.

(b) Contributions to Gender Links

Apart from her research, Caitlin will be able to work for Gender Links for up to 20 hours per week should Gender Links request a project or support that would be beneficial to them.

Prospective Timeline

Date	Activity	Participants
September 26 2012	**Arrival of Caitlin**	
September-October 2012 (6 weeks)	Interviews, participant-observation	Programme staff
	Organisational and context mapping	Caitlin with 1 or 2 resource people
November 2012	Perspective modeling	Programme staff
	Process modeling	Programme staff
December 2012	Discussion	Programme staff Field officers
January 2013-March 2013	Discussion Follow-up research (information needs analysis, perspective and process modeling)	Country managers 2 Country offices

Commitment from Caitlin Bentley

- During the agreed research periods, Caitlin commits to work with the highest integrity and in an open, participatory way with Gender Links and their partners.
- Caitlin also commits to deliver supplementary work by the agreed deadline and with a high quality standard.
- Caitlin will consistently share her research plans, to come up with an agreed and feasible research schedule in collaboration with Gender Links, and to respect and support participants in their learning throughout the project.
- Caitlin will provide Gender Links and the relevant research partners with a copy of all relevant research outputs.
- Caitlin will ensure that any material presented at any forum or published and emanating from the project and that is not anonymised will be shown to Gender Links prior to its presentation or publication in order to give Gender Links an opportunity to confirm the information.

Commitments from Gender Links

- Gender Links commits to support Caitlin's position as a researcher in collaboration with the GTF for the duration of her research project.
- Gender Links commits to assisting Caitlin in answering relevant research questions and allowing her to conduct interviews with staff should they agree.
- Considering Caitlin commits to allow Gender Links to check any writing (including her PhD) that mentions them by name or direct implication before it is published, Gender Links agrees to respond within two weeks of receipt of such writing, or otherwise forfeits any right to comment.

Termination

Either party is at liberty to terminate this agreement by giving either party a notice of 30 days from the commencement of the contract.

Signatories

_____   _____

Researcher's Signature   Date

Caitlin Bentley

_____   _____

                                          Date

Appendix 8

LIST OF INTERVIEWED PARTICIPANTS

Gender Links and DFID case study
* indicates real names

Antso, Male Country Officer 1, Gender Links
Malcom, Male Country Officer 2, Gender Links
Anand, Male Country Officer 3, Gender Links
Theo, Male Country Officer 4, Gender Links
Samito, Male Country Officer 5, Gender Links
Joyful, Female Programme Manager 1, Gender Links
Anesu, Female Programme Manager 2, Gender Links
Victoria, Female Programme Manager 3, Gender Links
Tendai, Male M and E Officer, Gender Links
Godfrey, Male HQ Officer, Gender Links
Pamela, Female Country Manager 1, Gender Links
Rosey, Female Country Manager 2, Gender Links
*Mevasse Sibia, Female Country Manager 3, Gender Links
Bidisha, Female Regional Director 1, Gender Links
Filimone, Male Regional Director 2, Gender Links
*Colleen Lowe Morna, CEO Gender Links
*Kubi Rama, COO Gender Links
Male DFID Civil Servant
Margaret, Female DFID Officer
Male Fund Manager

La Colombe, Crossroads and GAC case study

Female Director, La Colombe
Jacques, Male Manager, La Colombe
Marius, Male Officer, La Colombe
Koffi, Male PROVONAT 1, La Colombe
Edouard, Male PROVONAT 2, La Colombe
Marthe, Female PROVONAT 3, La Colombe
Julien, Male PROVONAT 4, La Colombe
Claire, Female local volunteer, La Colombe
Nissa, Volunteer 1, Crossroads
Pascal, Volunteer 2, Crossroads
Charlotte, Volunteer 3, Crossroads
Claire, Female Team Leader, Crossroads
Isabelle, Female Project Officer, DFATD

Appendix 9

EXAMPLE INSTITUTIONAL CASE STUDY

A photo of the Cou

Xai-Xai Municipal Council

"Temos que trabalhar" Rita Bento, President of the municipal council reflects on dealing with the recent floods in the Gaza province, the council is in a state of chaos, but through commitment and dedication, the city council is not losing sight of their gender mainstreaming objectives.

Fact box

COUNTRY	**Mozambique**
COUNCIL	**Xai-Xai**
Baseline score	80
Latest score	86
Population/audience	116 343
Key characteristics	Agricultural and industrial centre (rice and cashew are produced and transformed), a provider of services, including a district hospital and banking, and an administrative centre. Tourism is also important with beaches and hotels in the area.
Contact person	Rita Bento Muianga
Designation	President of the Xai Xai Municipal Council

Heavy rains early January indicated early flood warnings and governments and relief organisations started to prepare for disaster throughout the Gaza province in Mozambique. By February 20, at least 113 people had been killed and over 185 000 people had been temporarily displaced by the floods (UN Resident Coordinator, 20 Feb 2013). This is in stark contrast to the floods of 2000 that claimed over 800 lives and displaced significantly higher numbers of families in the area. Whilst the floods in 2013 were not as severe as those of 2000, disaster was also avoided due in part by the commitment of local councils like Xai Xai, who have been creating projects and policies to avoid natural disasters such as these. The President of the municipal

Temporary refugee camp in Xai Xai due to the January 2013 floods

council of Xai Xai, Rita Bento, explains "we were lucky with the floods but the rains still ruined many of our streets, our council had to move to a new temporary location,
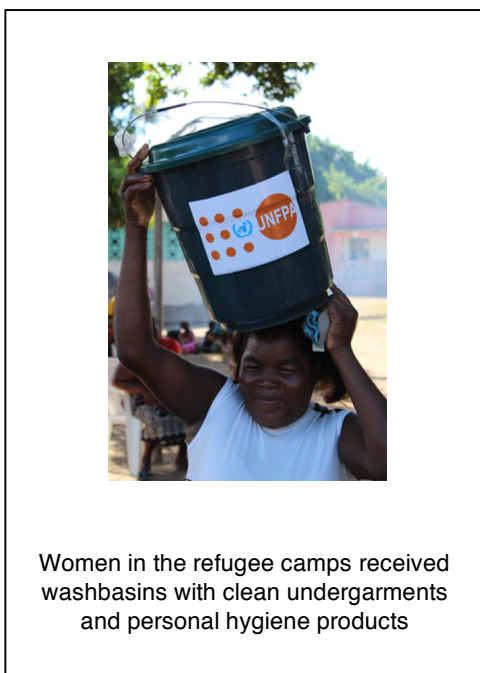
everything is in disarray, yet our staff is doing everything they can to support the flood victims, and coordinate relief work."

The Municipality of Xai-Xai has been planning to overcome climate change related problems listed in their Urban Structure Plan and Strategic Plan of the Municipality, and in part due to their participation in the Gender Links Centre of Excellence (CoE) programme, has been conscious of differences between the needs of men and women in this regard. Emildo Xavier, Secretary of the President's Office, said that through the CoE trainings and verification meetings, it prompts them to take time to think about the gendered dimensions of their activities, which ultimately reminds them whilst they are completing their work in areas such as climate change.

For instance, the city developed a program for monitoring, mitigating and combating erosion in affected areas which has gained success due to the direct participation of women and youth in the production and construction of gutter protection

Women in the refugee camps received washbasins with clean undergarments and personal hygiene products
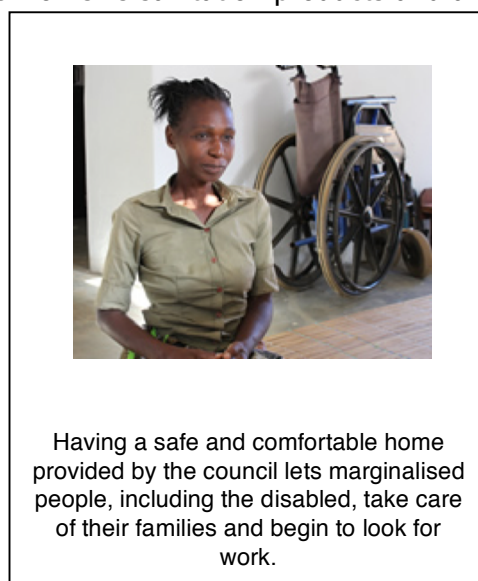
mechanisms to guard against erosion. The municipality is seeing that women's participation in both production and consultation activities serves as valuable input and encourages greater acceptance and compliance on the part of the community. The results are clear, streets have reopened that were closed due to erosion. This in turn benefits citizens that need to transport cashews or rice crops into the city for sale or export.

In the post-flood period they have also coordinated the creation and oversight of refugee camps to house displaced families. The councillor for water, energy, women's health and social action, Clara Manhique, is tasked with ensuring that clean water, cooking facilities and sanitation products are available for men and particularly women and children in order to prevent infectious disease and sickness. Manhique was working closely with international aid relief workers to distribute women's sanitation products and a washbasin. The council is also working tirelessly to re-distribute land to families in need to avoid the danger of future flooding.

Manhique has also pushed for more programmes that address the needs of the poorest and most marginalised in the area. The town has constructed a number of social houses which provide a safeguard for women, elderly and the disabled. One disabled woman stated that she would not have been able to take care of her son would it not be for the social housing programme in Xai Xai. The council also organised a Take Back the Night March during the 16 Days of Activism Campaign to draw attention to the problem of gender-based violence (GBV) in the county.

Having a safe and comfortable home provided by the council lets marginalised people, including the disabled, take care of their families and begin to look for work.

The police have since made presentations on GBV within local neighbourhoods to continue awareness-raising.

When the municipality started the CoE process in 2011, they used to focus on equalising representation within the council and raising awareness amongst staff. The council is close to gender-balanced entirely with President Bento heading the council, two women in leadership roles in the Municipal Assembly and one man, four women councilors and four men councilors. Out of six council commissions, only one is led by a woman however. Now, they are transitioning into mainstreaming gender throughout their programmes and through targeted activities. They are one of the only councils in Mozambique that has approved and circulated their gender policy and has an action plan dedicated to activities to address gender issues. For example, in 2011, 28% of the town's market stalls were occupied by women. The municipality created a budget and programme to target women and increase their share of market stalls. In 2012, the number of women running their own stalls rose to 40%. In the future, programmes like these can be leveraged by continuing to integrate gender through developing permanent structures in the council, as with a dedicated gender committee.

Argentina Simbine, Finance and Administration Councillor, is one of four out of eight municipal councillors.

Appendix 10

ORIGINAL RICH PICTURES OF COMPUTER-REDRAWN DIAGRAMS

Figure 4-4 The DFID Civil Servant's diagram of the Governance and Transparency's accountability processes
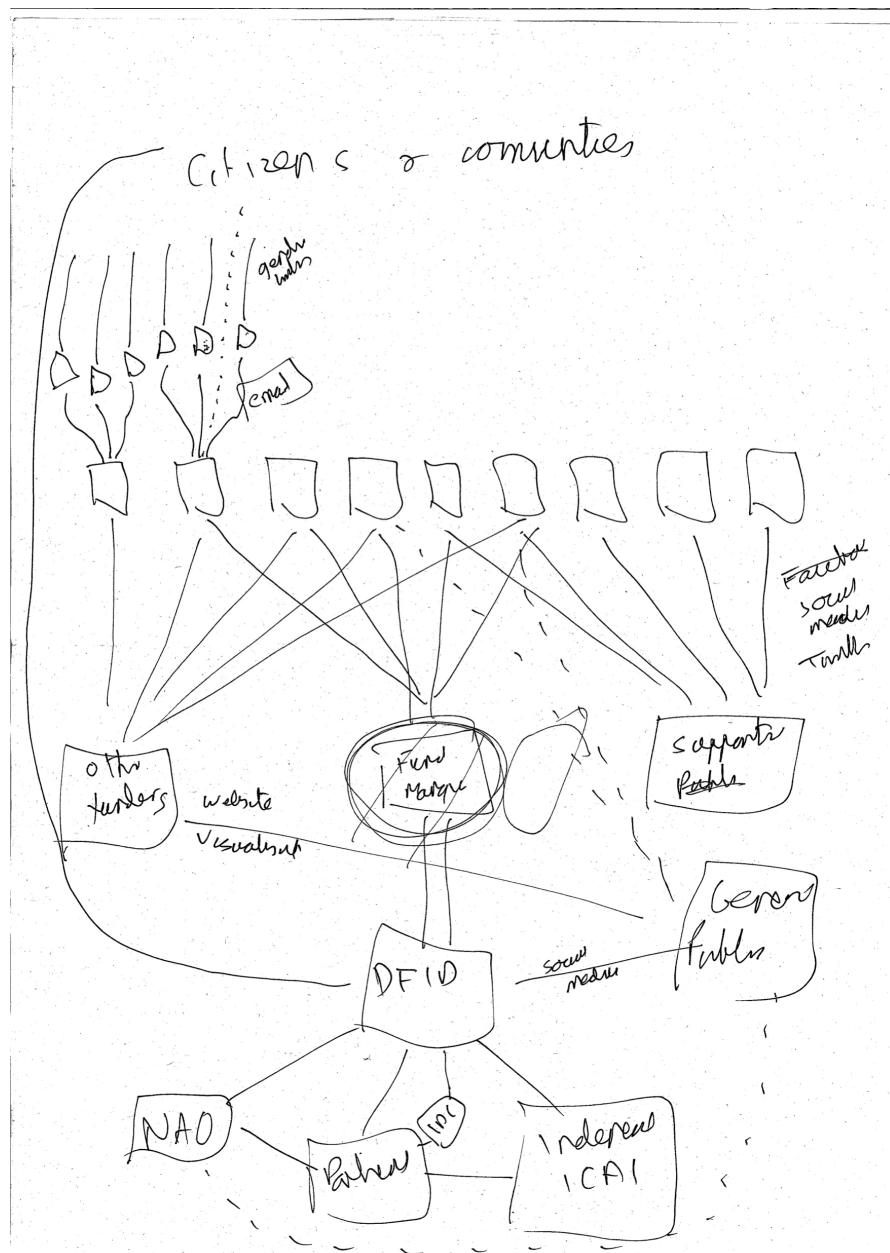
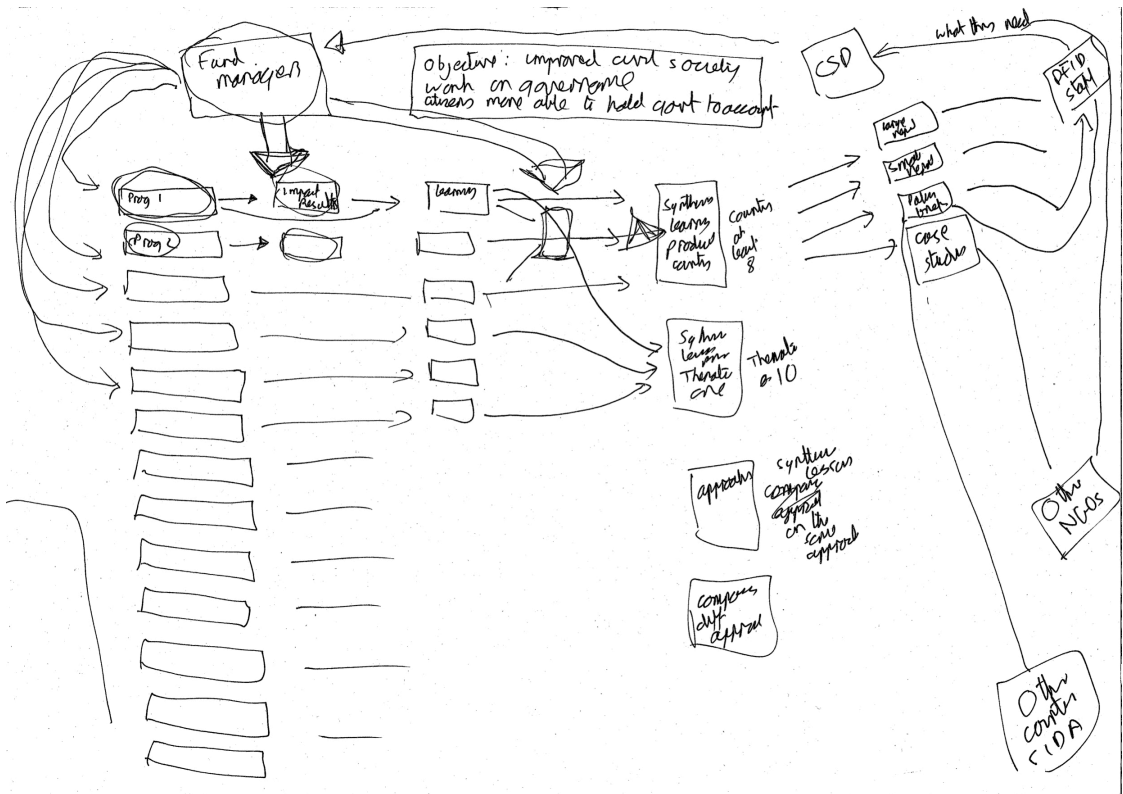**Figure 4-5 The DFID Civil Servant's GTF learning process diagram**

Figure 9-2. Learning whilst stuck in the middle of an accountability web