TRANSPARENCY & ACCOUNTABILITY INITIATIVE

Collaboration Case Note

Data Use for Accountability in Nigeria

February 2019

TAI seeks to foster collaboration between two or more members around our shared strategic priorities. Collaboration case notes document and asses the utility of such initiatives from the funder perspective.

What Problem(s) Were We Addressing?

TAI focused on a thematic problem around a shared sense that government and civic actors were struggling with data use for anti-corruption. TAI aimed to understand how data is used to fight corruption in Nigeria, the barriers faced by different actors in these efforts, and how best to support these efforts.

TAI also faced a functional problem around collaboration across TAI funder member strategies and portfolios. Most members' grantmaking is defined thematically, rather than by place, often covering multiple countries or regions. Yet many of the potential pathways to influence change are tied to place-based factors (e.g. political system, governing structures, etc.). TAI aimed to explore whether a country-level initiative would surface collective investment opportunities.

Who Collaborated and How?

The Secretariat and members co-designed and led a scoping trip in Nigeria. The Secretariat coordinated and facilitated the collaboration, and both Secretariat and TAI funder members provided time, thought leadership, and leveraged relationships to prepare for and conduct this initiative. There were many actors involved within the TAI network, including the Secretariat, 4 of TAI's funder members, and 2 TAI member field offices. In addition, TAI engaged partners to: support design and facilitation of the scoping mission; conduct a political economy analysis; and provide local knowledge and thematic expertise. During the field work, TAI convened workshops and conducted interviews with government actors and CSOs (some but not all of which were TAI funder grantee organizations). Finally, TAI consulted with international NGOs and non-TAI member bi- and multi-lateral funders working on related themes in Nigeria or globally.

What Type of Collaboration Was It?

Members engaged in collective inquiry, interpreting existing information and experiences, including the Mobilizing Data for Anti-Corruption (MODAC) scoping work in which some members participated and lessons from Trust Africa. The actual scoping mission is an example of exploration, as members co-invested their resources to generate experiential learning and evidence with other actors, including grantee organizations. It The scoping trip resulted in multi-member actions, including identifying two projects in Nigeria supported by two TAI members and a member field office. And a third member invested in a TAI learning partner for Nigeria and future work in Colombia. There was not a shared TAI understanding of what successful "alignment" would look like for this initiative, nor a clear timeline around which joint investments were to occur.

INCEPTION / DESIGN
- May: general problem statement and concept note.
- October: kick-off call, then weekly calls with members

Late 2017

FIELD WORK
- January 23-February 3: mission in Abuja and Lagos.
- February: post-mission member and participant surveys

Mid 2018

Mid 2017

STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT
- December: workshop participant outreach.
- December/January: workshop participant survey

Early 2018

DEBRIEFING AND ACTION
- February - May: member calls, projects identified.
- May: begin transition to Colombia initiative. September: Nigeria follow-up grants finalized.
- October: TAI synthesis shared publicly.

How Did the Collaboration Evolve?

This initiative relied heavily on Secretariat and member co-creation of the mission, co-facilitation of meetings, and co-design of many of the tools used and documents produced. TAI efforts to co-identify the thematic problem and the purpose of the scoping mission occurred during a four-month period (nearly a quarter of the initiative's duration).

> "The convening opened up conversation that are mostly unusual in the CSOs space to explore collaborations and have an in-depth understanding of how our collective work & efforts align."

As the field trip dates approached, design and planning efforts transitioned from conversation of specific member strategic frameworks and interests to a focus on workshop participant experiences and needs. Indeed, the group postponed the field dates to allow for decision making on the mission problem and purpose. The Secretariat ultimately drafted an options memo with objectives for member input.

Finally, the planned way of working with government and civic actors in the field evolved, largely based on the participant survey data TAI collected. The field workshops shifted from a problem-centric focus on data use barriers to a problem-driven framing that attempted to link barriers to solutions.

What Have We Achieved?

- Rich knowledge sharing among members around data use and anti-corruption efforts in Nigeria and beyond; member conversations surfaced and questioned assumptions around data use and related outcomes.
- Data collected surfaced grantee insights on the value of potential donor support to foster a more cohesive community of anti-corruption data users in Nigeria (e.g. supporting knowledge management and sharing and fostering institutional partnerships).

- New connections made among data use and anti-corruption activists in Nigeria at TAI workshops.
- Member investment in follow-on work in Nigeria to support use of specific datasets, including two projects focused on use of government open contracting data, and use of data to recover stolen assets in Nigeria; and a TAI learning partner to draw support collaborative-level learning on data use for accountability from Nigeria and future work in Colombia.

Was the Collaboration Useful to Members?

Participating program officers generally felt that the initiative was a positive collaboration, but there were open questions on the utility of the initiative at the director level. Some members of the delegation also felt that the thematic problem was too broadly defined for actionable learnings to be surfaced. Before the Nigeria knowledge and evidence products were finalized, work began on a related Colombia initiative, suggesting continued interest in thematic, country-based collaboration.

Barriers to Collaboration Use	Enablers of Collaboration Use
Thematic problem took much time and effort to frame; iterative discussions around technical and political aspects of data use	Emphasis on co-design with members allowed for peer information sharing and joint inquiry
Scoping purpose defined relatively late in the design process; lingering uncertainty among TAI group around field mission objectives and each member's potential to commit to joint investment	TAI gathered rich workshop participant feedback in various forms, and grantee storytelling useful tool for field engagement
Stakeholders included diverse thematic actors and varying degrees of subject matter experience, which may have favored breadth of content and learnings over depth	Diversity of in-country workshop participants showcased range of anti-corruption experiences and resulted in new connections made
Heavy field documentation burden on TAI group; prolonged post-mission documentation of knowledge and learnings	Immediate translation of experience and lessons learned on thematic problem and collaboration process to subsequent Colombia work

Did the Collaboration Address the Problem?

This collaboration did contribute to collective understanding and documentation of anti-corruption data use challenges and opportunities to help mitigate those concerns in Nigeria. In post-mission reflections, some TAI members observed that the initiative may have served more to test existing assumptions rather than offer new insights for member learning.

> *"Even if the only learning is, 'wow, we've been prioritizing the wrong kinds of things and should be thinking about this work differently,' that would still be an invaluable outcome to my mind."*

This initiative did yield multi-member investments in Nigeria, and in TAI's future learning efforts on data use for accountability. TAI mission participants generally agreed that the level and intensity of engagement – for members and the Secretariat – were not commensurate to the results achieved, and this learning is informing subsequent work in Colombia.

Lessons Learned

Define clear objectives for the country-level scoping early in the design process. A narrower framing of the thematic problem would allow for a clear and timely stakeholder engagement purpose and process. Clarity on objectives of any in-country convenings is also important, whether it be peer-to-peer sharing, skill building, brainstorming problem identification, convening for potential action, or informing research. There may be different objectives for different stakeholder groups, but the objectives should be mutually reinforcing and reasonable given the planned time in the field.

Give equal time to defining clear expectations of a successful collaboration. This starts with consideration of the purpose of collaboration, and the feasibility of expectations given the initiative time horizon. Influencing a member's existing funding portfolio is quite different from multiple members aligning future investments to close gaps identified or from leveraging TAI funding with non-TAI funders. Yet all might be considered examples of joint investment by different stakeholders. Relatedly, it is helpful to discuss expectations for member commitment of resources (time, funding, in-kind support, etc.) up front, during and after the collaboration initiative to shape realistic expectations.

Clarify TAI collaborative roles and responsibilities relative to the purpose and objectives of collaboration, particularly around how different decisions will be taken and by whom. It is important that collaboration decisions are put to stakeholders who have decision-making authority and bandwidth, or that sufficient time is built in to engage the relevant decision maker(s). Consider the degree of co-creation – or other collaboration model – that would best serve the initiative purpose and objectives.

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Engage locally-based expertise early in a country-level collaboration initiative. It is helpful to engage a local partner(s) to provide logistical support, and, more importantly, to work with TAI to ensure that in-country work is culturally sensitive and context relevant. This also includes early engagement with TAI member regional or country office teams, that have deep expertise and country-level relationships. It is important to recognize that TAI members' country or regional counterparts may have independent grant making priorities and decision-making processes.

Transparency and Accountability Initiative is a collaborative of leading funders of transparency, accountability and participation worldwide. It envisions a world where citizens are informed and empowered; governments are open and responsive; and collective action advances the public good. Toward this end, TAI aims to increase the collective impact of transparency and accountability interventions by strengthening grantmaking practice, learning and collaboration among its members. TAI focuses on the following thematic areas: data use for accountability, strengthening civic space, taxation and tax governance, learning for improved grantmaking.

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