

Mona Foundation

Theory of Change



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Introduction

According to the World Bank's World Development Indicators Report, in 2012 approximately 10 percent of people live in extreme poverty (less than \$1.90 a day). Overall, nearly half of the world's 7 billion people still live in poverty (less than \$2.50 a day).

Although the overall number of people living in poverty has been declining in recent years, the work to eliminate poverty is far from over. The 767 million people who remain in extreme poverty are in places that are more difficult to reach and live in more challenging conditions.

Institutions like the World Bank and the United Nations Development Fund, among others, continue to study the factors that contribute to the process of lifting people out of poverty. Access to education, healthcare, and clean water are all critical factors, but they remain out of reach, especially for women and people in rural communities. Sometimes people make progress, then an emergency happens and they find themselves back in poverty.

Underlying Assumptions

Mona Foundation works toward the elimination of global poverty by supporting community led transformation. The vision is to see children access food, health, education and shelter so that they can grow to their fullest potential.

A set of guiding principles underpin the work of Mona Foundation. These principles that guide the work serve as a set of underlying assumptions about social change, namely that:

- Individuals and communities, regardless of the degree of their material prosperity, have the capacity, the right, and the responsibility to fully participate in the process of social and economic development of their communities. Change is sustainable when they are the principal actors in defining, analyzing and solving their own problems.
- Social and economic development is a process and not an event that can be achieved within short timelines. For this reason, long term and deep partnerships with grassroots organizations are critical to achieving transformative change.
- Without building capacity at the grassroots level, any model of development is not sustainable and is untenable. This is true not only to the internal development and sustainability of the programs but also to the capacity building within the community that the organization serves.

The Theory of Change

In 2016 Mona Foundation spent time analyzing information and data from grantees in order to identify the essential elements that lead to transformation. The theory of change, articulated below, is an informed hypothesis about what pathways, interactions, and relationships must be present to create an enabling environment where change occurs and impact is felt. It articulates three components that contribute to community transformation: organizational change, individual change, and social change. Each is explained below.

Organizational Change

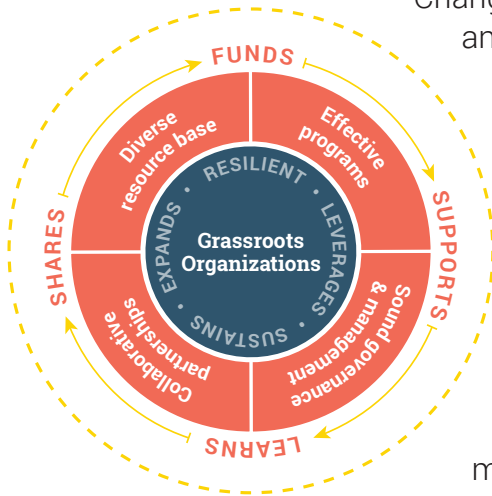
Change begins with individuals in the community identifying a problem and deciding to take action to make things better. Individuals, families, or small groups create grassroots organizations to create change by mobilizing resources, people, and creating programs and support systems.

As they take action, their work leads to specific change in the lives of the people they serve. This increases their credibility and creates greater demand for the support and services they provide.

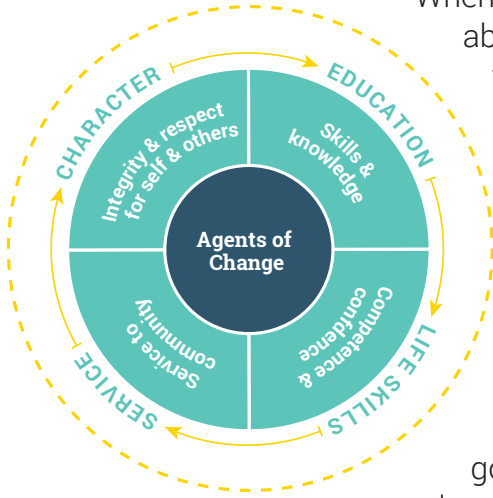
In order to serve more individuals, the organization must become more effective and expand. They seek support and resources from a variety of actors and institutions.

Support from development partners, like the Mona Foundation, further enhances the process of organizational development. Within the existing context, available resources, and leadership capacity, the grassroots organizations improve their management, programming, collaborations and resource base.

As a result, the organization develops greater capacity to expand their programs and services to reach more people. This expanded capacity also gives them greater resilience to overcome inevitable challenges. They can sustain the work because of the trust between stakeholders in the community that facilitates joint action for community development. They can leverage their knowledge and influence to create wider change.



Individual Change



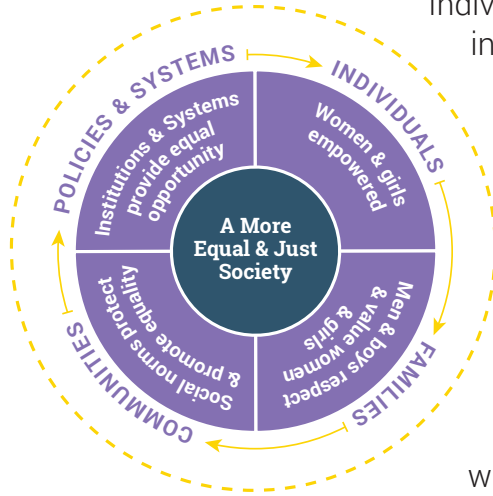
When it comes right down to it, social and economic development is about people as individuals, and within their families and communities. As research shows poverty is associated with a lack of assets, limited opportunities and restricted development of knowledge and skills.

Grassroots organizations work to change this by developing processes that supports individual development by impacting skills, knowledge, as well as attitude and behavior.

Using a holistic approach, individuals develop skills and knowledge, as well as confidence and competence to achieve their goals. They are guided toward active citizenship through character development and community service.

This process facilitates individual transformation. Each individual emerges from these programs as an agent of change, contributing to social and economic development within their families and communities.

Social Change



Individual change alone is not enough. Lasting change happens when individuals work toward shared goals, as a result, they impact the systems that shape their lives.

Individuals use their skills, knowledge, and community service to develop their families and communities. The change is transformative when educated women and girls have the confidence and skills to take action, and when men and boys respect, value, and support them.

Change is sustained when these new patterns of interaction are embedded within a community's social norms and protected within a society's policies and systems. Through those systems, more individuals in the community are impacted and changed.

Pathway of Change

This kind of impact takes a long time to take root. It requires action from more than just a single organization. It is sustained when it is institutionalized and actualized by individual attitudes and perspectives, social relationships, social norms, and systems within institutions, policies, and practices. It becomes possible when other actors in the community – the individuals, family, community, systems, all drive social change toward a more equal and just society.



Mona Foundation's Role

Mona Foundation supports this process of long-term social change by identifying partners who have initiated action to create change in their communities.

Based on those valued, Mona Foundation develops and values a relationship of reciprocity with their grassroots partners based on mutual respect, consultation, reflection, and shared learning. They provide long-term support with a focus on:

- **Funding:** Mona Foundation provides grants to each grassroots partner. Long-term support allows partners to build up their programs and to grow organically.
- **Building Capacity:** Funds and engagement with Mona staff and Board members help each organization build up their own organization skills, knowledge, and systems.
- **Learning:** Continuous engagement as well as data provide ongoing learning about what does not work and to strengthen what works.
- **Sharing:** Mona shares what they learn with partners, supporter, and recently, other development actors.

Conclusion

The “theory of change” is widely used in philanthropy and international development. Mona Foundation defines the Theory of Change (TOC) “an on-going process of reflection to explore change and how it happens and what that means for the part we play in a particular context, sector and /or group of people” (Vogel 2012; 9; James, 2012; 11 -13). Using this definition, the TOC is an informed hypothesis about what pathways, interactions, and relationships must be present to create a conducive environment where change occurs and impact is felt. A TOC may include organizational values, preconditions to the work and contextual factors.

The impetus for developing the theory of change is to create a shared internal framework guiding Mona Foundation’s understanding of its work and the work of its partners. The theory of change was informed by the work of the partners, based on coding grantee partner proposals and reports and complemented by interview with Mona Foundation Board and staff. This approach was exploratory and retrospective. By relying upon reports and narratives, previously submitted by our CBO partners, we decreased the burden that more conventional TOC processes might have placed on our grantees. Our TOC demonstrates a cost-effective alternative to current TOC participatory methods.

Going forward, Mona Foundation test the theory of change through a process of ongoing inquiry and learning. As the foundation and its partners gain insights and new understanding, they will be able to use that knowledge to refine the theory of change, and to improve the foundation’s approach to partnership, enhance programming of grassroots partners, and influence the wider field of social and economic development.

Definitions

Grassroots Organization: organizations that are started and led by local people to address the needs of the local community.

Social and economic development: supporting families to build up the physical, human, social and economic resources that they require to live lives of dignity and hope.

Holistic Support: addresses the multiple and inter-related needs of people in order to meet their developmental needs. For example, an education program that addresses academic, life skills, community service, and character development.

Organizational Capacity: the skills and resources needed by an organization in order to operate efficiently and deliver programs effectively to achieve its goals and its mission.



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