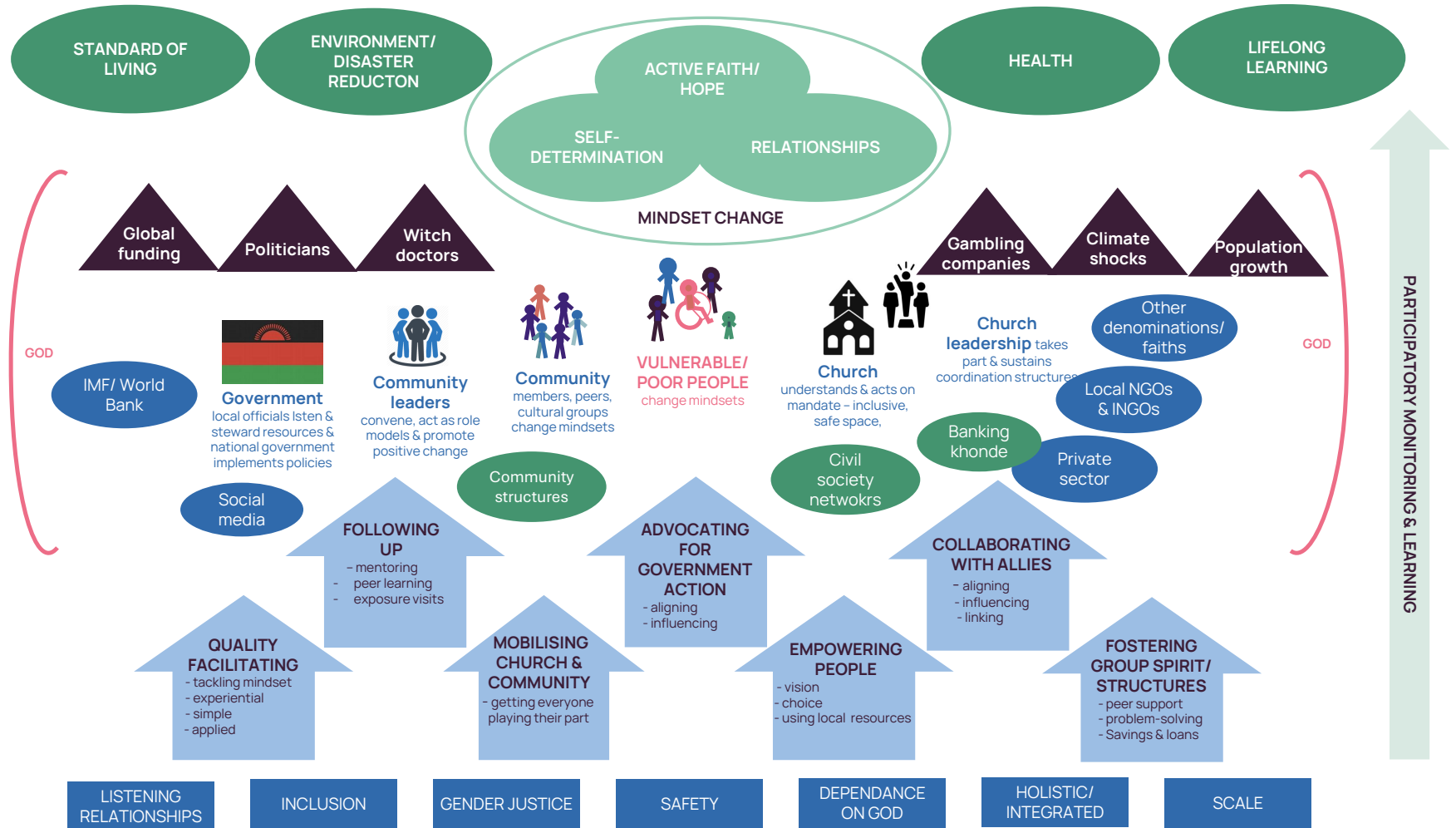
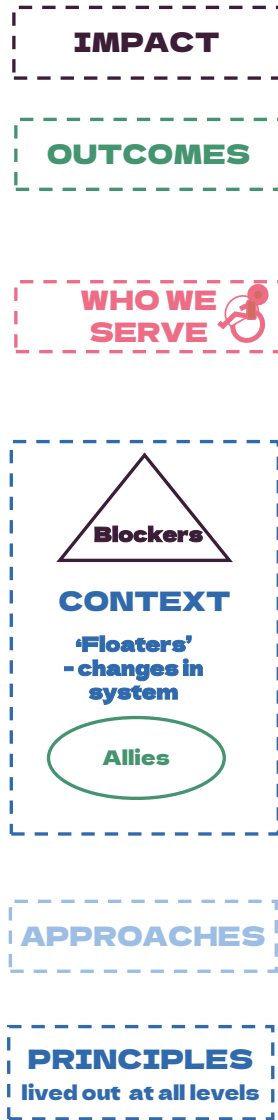


EAGLES MALAWI - ORGANISATIONAL THEORY OF CHANGE

Mobilised and empowered local churches and communities have taken responsibility for their own development and are working together to achieve lasting and holistic change



Eagles Malawi – Theory of Change

A. INTRODUCTION

A1. Eagles' background

Eagles Relief and Development Programme began in 2002 when famine hit Malawi. We are a registered NGO in Malawi under the banner of Living Waters Church. Our mission is to mobilise and empower local churches and communities to take responsibility for their own development, collaborate with others and work together to achieve lasting and holistic change. Our work is underpinned by our values.

Together with others, we have developed and strengthened our core approach of 'Church and Community Mobilisation' (CCM). CCM equips local churches to understand their mandate to work with the poor and vulnerable – people of all faiths and none. We help communities identify their greatest problems, mobilise their own resources and engage with government to solve their problems and transform their lives. We also run programmes focused on disaster preparation, mitigation and response.

Eagles works in about 500 communities across Malawi, supporting over 900,000 people. We have offices in Blantyre, Lilongwe, Mzuzu, Zomba and Chikwawa. We also have a registered support arm in the UK. As well as our work in Malawi we have developed a six-month online CCM course that reaches people from many organisations and churches across the world.

A2. Theory of Change process

Eagles has had a theory of change (ToC) since 2011, which has provided a basis for ongoing reflection and for Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL). We wanted to go through a process again that would draw in new staff with former members and enable us to take a fresh look at how change happens in our context and then compare that to our previous thinking. This process brought together representatives from all our offices and programmes in a participatory workshop. Our process followed key [evidenced](#) principles that underpin a good ToC, including

- **Stepping out of the project box**
- **Drawing on internal and external learning**
- **Involving a range of people** in an open and participatory process
- **Focusing on change and actors**
- **Representing theory with validity but simplicity** (showing linkages and priorities)
- **Building in ongoing theorising and learning** (part of an ongoing process of reflection)

B. WHO WE SERVE

Eagles exists to serve the most vulnerable and poor people and their wider community. We reach across the whole country, including communities that are remote and those most affected by climate shocks. Within those communities, we actively seek to identify and empower the most disadvantaged groups, and especially those with multiple and intersecting vulnerabilities:

- Women and girls, including those affected by trauma, violence and harmful practices and those who are widows and those who are pregnant
- Youth and children, including under-fives, school dropouts and orphans
- People with disabilities – recognising we need to do more to reach the visually impaired
- Those who are elderly or chronically ill

C. THE CONTEXT

We understand that our work takes place in a very complex context where many factors and actors already influence those we serve and with whom we work. We need to make sure that we identify those who are allies, with whom we can work to leverage greater change and address issues outside our scope; those who are 'floaters' – both duty-bearers and rights-holders who should be positively influencing change but may be hindering or not taking up their responsibilities; and the 'blockers' of change that we cannot influence but whose negative impact we need to mitigate. We have identified the following as most important:

C1. Allies (those who share a similar mission and are working towards related goals):

- Civil society networks bring people together to coordinate work and advocacy
- Community structures, such as 'Disaster Response and Mitigation' and Village Development Committees are critical for effectiveness and sustainability
- 'Banking khondes' bring together different types of Village Loans and Savings groups and help them link to private sector

C2. Floaters (those gatekeepers/ duty bearers who we need to work with to ensure they positively influence change, rather than hindering or not playing their part):

- Vulnerable people we serve and their local communities are hindered by hopelessness, dependency, lack of self-worth, attitudes to gender, marriage systems that lead to land issues, crime and by lack of access to information, literacy and learning.
- Local churches can influence change positively through their mandate for justice, helpful teaching and good structures, e.g. home cells, women and youth groups. They can also hinder change through negative/ wrong doctrine, by focusing only on spiritual change and by immoral/ poor behaviour of their leaders at all levels. Wealthy members exert a strong influence which may be positive or negative.
- Other faiths/ denominations may have similar assets and hindrances. Division within and among them is a barrier to leveraging change.

- Community leaders, cultural heritage groups and local councillors, as well as peers, relatives and opinion leaders can influence positively or foster harmful practices and unfair use of resources and support.
- The private sector can provide linkages, expertise and support, but sometimes subverts justice e.g. by appropriating community land meant for farming.
- Government is critical at all levels and across the judiciary, legislature and executive to leverage greater change through its policies, expertise and resources. However, policies are often not implemented, resources do not reach the right people and officials are inactive or obstructive.
- Local and international NGOs should act as our allies but often foster greater dependency through handouts and poor practices in programme delivery.
- Social media often encourages conspiracy theories, rumours and misinformation that negatively affect people, but can be used to support positive change

C3. Blockers (those issues and actors that exert negative power and that we cannot directly influence – but only mitigate)

- Climate shocks have taken a terrible and increasing toll on communities, especially over the last five years. Periods of drought, flooding and tropical storms/ cyclones have destroyed crops, homes and even taken lives.
- The global funding context has become an obstacle to ongoing work, as many countries become more inward looking and protectionist, while wars also impact the cost of living.
- Population growth is exacerbating the impact of climate shocks and cost of living as it affects land fertility and also changes the demographic of the nation.
- Politicians exert an often negative influence through corruption and handouts, and even sometimes fostering violence, particularly in the run up to elections.
- At local level, people are negatively affected by crime, by the influence of witchdoctors and by gambling companies which lead people to misuse funds.

D. OUTCOMES

D1. Impact

Our desired impact is to fulfil our mission so we see that:

Mobilised and empowered local churches and communities have taken responsibility for their own development and are working together to achieve lasting and holistic change.

D2. Lasting changes in people's lives

Our learning, both internally and externally, shows that Eagles' unique contribution to lasting and ongoing positive outcomes in people's lives is to change mindsets. This means that tangible changes in other areas will be sustained and new changes will take place because the mindset forms the foundation for everything else.

Mindset change is seen in three main areas:

- i. **Hope/ active faith** – regardless of their faith background, we help people gain:
 - Hope and a sense of self-worth
 - Closeness to God, praying and reading scripture more
 - Healing from trauma and access to emotional/ psychosocial support
- ii. **Self-determination** – as people reduce dependency, they strengthen their:
 - Problem-solving using their own locally available resources
 - Confidence and voice, advocating with authorities to realise their rights
 - Resilience, making good choices now and in the future
- iii. **Relationships** – people improve relationships at all levels. They improve:
 - Relationships within families and between men/ women and children
 - Unity among within their own faith groups, with others and with community
 - Care for others, especially acts of love/ compassion for the vulnerable and stigmatised

Mindset change forms the foundation for bringing positive change in more tangible areas, for enabling people to ensure those changes benefit their families and communities (not just for personal gain) and for sustaining them. Eagles helps people see **tangible changes** in:

- iv. **Standard of living** – people see improved:
 - Food security, with more and diversified sources of food
 - Income and assets (with a savings culture and diversified income sources)
 - Employment of others
- v. **Environment/ disaster response and mitigation** – people improve their:
 - Care for the environment as a result of fuel-saving measures, tree-planting etc
 - Capacity and actions to plan for and mitigate the impact of climate shocks
 - Response to disasters, working together to help those most in need
- vi. **Health** – because of Eagles, people improve their:
 - Nutrition, hygiene and access to clean water
 - Children's access to and support in education, especially for under-fives and OVCs
 - Protection from and management of disease
- vii. **Lifelong learning** – people gain:
 - Access and use information to improve their lives/ participation
 - Gain confidence and voice, advocating with authorities to realise their rights
 - Links to functional literacy opportunities and programmes

D3. Changes at other levels (system)

In order to create sustainable impact, Eagles works to bring change in the system too – the context that influences the change process. Priority changes needed at other levels include:

- i. **Church leaders at all levels** (bishops, pastors, prophets, elders, women and youth leaders etc) provide effective leadership, acting as role models and setting up/ strengthening structures to manage and sustain holistic transformation e.g. (Social Action Committees)

- ii. **Church members** develop positive mindsets (see D2), understand and act on their mandate to work with the poor and vulnerable, demonstrate qualities of inclusion, participation of all ages/ groups, accountability and a safe space to tackle sensitive issues
- iii. **Community leaders** (chiefs, councillors, cultural heritage groups etc) convene the wider community, take an active part in activities to promote positive norms/ change, act as role models and demonstrate qualities of inclusion/ transparency and impartiality
- iv. **Wider community members** develop positive mindsets (see D2), understand, advocate for and track government resources/ schemes and take part in planning, implementing and monitoring actions to bring positive change
- v. **Local government officials** listen and respond to their communities (including the most vulnerable), demonstrate qualities of impartiality and transparency, practising good stewardship of resources so they reach the right people and supporting community action
- vi. **National government** implement policies (e.g. Political Act and the Disaster Relief Policy) and improve responsiveness and cooperation among government actors

E. HOW CHANGE HAPPENS

Our success depends on effective approaches underpinned by our principles and by our organisational identity and capacity. In both our CCM work and our disaster mitigation and response, the role of the local church is a key foundation for effectiveness and sustainability.

E1. Approaches

Our three core approaches are:

- i. **Facilitating with quality** – Eagles 'training' always tackles mindset change and is simple, experiential, participatory, practical and fosters peer review/ support.
- ii. **Mobilising church and community** – Eagles' approach gets everyone playing their part and involved in planning, implementing and monitoring joint analysis and action.
- iii. **Empowering people** – Eagles enables churches and communities to develop a vision for their future, identify and use their own locally available resources and make good choices.
- iv. **Fostering group spirit/ structures** – We work through existing groups where possible, connecting people to savings and loans and to peer support and shared problem-solving.

We have learned that to sustain change, it is also vital to take these approaches:

- v. **Following up** – People and groups need ongoing mentoring and support, as well as opportunities to learn from each other and celebrate successes (e.g. exposure visits).
- vi. **Advocating for government action** – We empower local people to link to government, aligning initiatives with their priorities and influencing government implementation.
- vii. **Collaborating with allies** – We link up with civil society networks, NGOs, community structures and private sector to connect people to other expertise/ support, to avoid duplicating efforts and to influence their approaches to become more effective.

Across our work, we recognise the importance of effective participatory monitoring, evaluation.

E2. Principles

To be effective, we need to make sure we mainstream these principles in all our approaches:

- **Listening relationships** – founding everything we do on relationships of trust in which we do not only consult, but listen to the left-out voices, to silence, to intention and to feelings.
- **Inclusion** – enabling churches and communities to identify those who are left out of development processes and give them space to have a voice and take part in all aspects.
- **Gender justice** – involving everyone in understanding the roles that men, women, girls and boys play, based on good theology, to increase gender equity and justice.
- **Dependence on God** – creating space to listen to God, guided by his wisdom, empowered by his Spirit and integrating faith in everything we do.
- **Safety** – facilitating dialogue/ reflection that surface hidden beliefs, attitudes and practices that are harmful from the beginning and finding ways to tackle them together.
- **Holistic and integrated** – working with whole people (physically, emotionally, spiritually and mentally) to help them bring the changes they want to see across their lives.
- **Scale** – ensuring that the work we do will have a multiplier effect as people are equipped to solve their own problems and facilitate change for themselves and others.

E3. Assumptions

Much of our approach rests on strong evidence from our own experiences, those we serve and their communities, and from external learning. The theory of change process has helped us recognise the most important assumptions underpinning our work. In our strategic plan, we will include specific strategies to address these and ensure they do not derail our work.

External assumptions

- Enough political stability, where the effects of corruption on our work can be successfully mitigated e.g. the impact of handouts at election meetings
- Natural disasters will be prepared for and well managed
- Government will stabilise the economic environment, including inflation and the availability of forex and fuel

Organisational assumptions:

- Eagles sustains its reputation and maintains good relationships with everyone involved
- Eagles implements its ToC and strategy, with each member of the team taking responsibility to put the plans into practice
- Eagles is able to retain staff with the requisite character and competence

Programme assumptions:

- Churches take up their roles and are mobilised at all levels – and that national decisions and actions support rather than undermine the work e.g. church leader transfers.
- Our approaches activate community, (l)NGOs and government to play a positive role in change.
- We continue to find and diversify good quality funders whose values and approaches align with our work and support our core costs and sustainability, as well as programmes.

F. APPLYING EAGLES' THEORY OF CHANGE

F1. Our strategy, programmes and projects

We will use our ToC as a foundation for our new strategic plan, identifying specific strategies to facilitate our approaches and principles. We will align our staffing, processes and workplans with our core beliefs about how we contribute most effectively to change, analysing:

- *What do we need to continue doing that is in line with our ToC?*
- *What do we need to reduce or stop doing that is not in line with our ToC learning?*
- *What do we need to strengthen or do differently/ better to align with our ToC?*

Some of the elements that our ToC highlighted to strengthen included:

In CCM:

- targeting more intentionally the groups left out e.g. the blind and visually impaired
- engaging church and community more in participatory monitoring
- training, following up and monitoring new and non-CCM staff in quality facilitation and church/ community facilitators (including through exposure visits)
- ensuring we reach beyond church leaders to include youth, children, women etc

In our disaster mitigation and response projects:

- using more of the CCM tools for changing mindsets
- giving more space to listen deeply to communities and not only consult them
- working more effectively with local churches at all levels as part of all projects
- strengthening work to empower people to use locally available resources

F2. Our monitoring, learning and evaluation

Our ToC provides a framework for our MEL as we continue to explore the five core questions:

- a. WHO do we serve who is left out? How well are we reaching the most disadvantaged?*
- b. WHAT long-term changes are we bringing in people's lives?*
- c. CONTEXT: Who and what helps/ hinders change? What changes do we bring in them?*
- d. HOW: What approaches/ success factors that contribute to lasting change?*
- e. ASSUMPTIONS: How strong is our evidence? How are we testing our assumptions?*

At community level, we can test our ToC, making sure the WHO, WHAT, CONTEXT (influencers) and HOW questions are integrated in our participatory monitoring activities.

F3. Our organisation strengthening (OS)

Our ToC process identified the importance of living out our values and integrating our principles in all the work we do. In line with our ToC and organisational assumptions, we need to analyse what attitudes, relationships and approaches are most effective in strengthening team work and cohesion, sharing learning and supporting ourselves and each other to put what we have agreed into practice.