

## THE WEB OF INSTITUTIONALISATION (Levy 1996)

### Assessing Uptake of ToC Thinking in Hivos

Based on: C. Levy. 'The Process of Institutionalising Gender in Policy and Planning: the web of institutionalisation'.  
*DPU Working Paper No 74*, Development Planning Unit, University College London (1996).  
<http://www.ucl.ac.uk/dpu/publications/working%20papers%20pdf/wp74.pdf>

#### *Background*

Many development-focused organisations profess to upholding a wide range of values such as gender equity, participation, power-sensitivity, poverty-focused, organisational learning and so forth. Yet in practice, these organisations are often inconsistent in what they say and what they enable and do. It is very much harder to truly 'institutionalise' values than simply to stating their importance. Dr. C. Levy noticed many disappointing results in the context of her work on mainstreaming gender equity in organisations. There was very little evidence of sustained change that related to a gender perspective in the practices of the organisations (NGO, government, bilateral and multilateral) that she encountered.

To encourage a more systemic and systematic analysis of what is needed to embed a value in an organisation, Levy developed the idea of a 'web' of elements that all need to be in place for coherence and consistency. The web identifies 13 essential areas that need to be synchronised for institutionalising a normative shift, such as gender awareness, organisational learning, or power analysis.

This process should help understand existing strengths and opportunities for change in your context to make it more able to learn. This is achieved by scanning 13 elements that together indicate how effective your organizational context is likely to be at encouraging organisational learning. Where areas are weak or contradictory, this indicates how the work could be improved. For each element of the web, describe what the organisation is undertaking in terms of organisational learning. Identify which elements are strong and which are weak, requiring improvements.

Two notes on how to use the web to diagnose a situation in relation to a desired change.

1. Identify clearly what system you are analysing and its boundaries. Is it an organisation, a network, a multi-level government agency, a government, etc...? What is inside and what is outside? This determines how the questions will be framed.
2. Be clear about the change that serves as the reference point.

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### CORE ELEMENTS (AND GUIDING QUESTIONS)

#### *Citizen's sphere*

1. **Women's and men's experience and their own interpretation of reality**
  - Are local women's and men's views being heard (their knowledge and realities) in ways that feed into the understanding and implementation of collective ToC development?
2. **Pressure of political constituencies**

- Do key players have ways in which to have their voice heard and contribute to ToC thinking?

### **3. Representative political structures/ Formal (anticipated and existing) structures**

- Do the formal structures and key players (their mandates, capacities, conditions) genuinely influence Hivos in ways that are true to the essence of critical ToC thinking and use?

#### *Policy sphere (organisational discourse)*

#### **4. Political commitment**

- Is there a formal (explicit) political willingness by organisational leadership to pursue ToC thinking (in partners and within Hivos)?

#### **5. Policy and conceptual clarity**

- What policies (vision/mission) are in place that support ToC use? And is the conceptual understanding of ToC thinking and use clear?

#### **6. Resources**

- What financial resources are in place to support policy (see element 5 above)? Are these adequate - commensurate with stated intentions?

#### *Organizational sphere (the 'hard' system of the organisation)*

#### **7. Mainstream location of responsibility for stakeholder participation**

- Who or which parts of the organisation or network has the responsibility to implement ToC use, and to what extent are these influential players?

#### **8. Procedures**

- What routinised daily activities are in place to encourage ToC thinking? (eg communication processes in general, reporting formats, terms of reference, aspects of staff guidelines, monitoring and evaluation, etc)

#### **9. Staff development**

- What is being undertaken for Hivos and partner staff, intermediating consultants to be more competent in ToC thinking and its use?

#### *Delivery Sphere*

#### **10. Methodology**

- Does a clear organisational philosophy and methods exist (e.g. that is used to guide staff development) to ensure ToC thinking?

#### **11. Delivery of programmes and projects**

- How is use of ToC thinking/processes/tools made possible through the actual delivery of programmes and projects?

#### **12. Research – learning activities (including evaluation)**

- What research/learning processes are being carried out to improve the understanding and use of ToC thinking?

**13. Theory building (applying the learning/turning the learning into new ways of working)**

- How are insights/research results translated into new and better understandings and practices of (theories about) ToC use?

***14. Culture and Leadership***

- *Does the organisational and context-specific culture and leadership enable or undermine ToC use?*

