

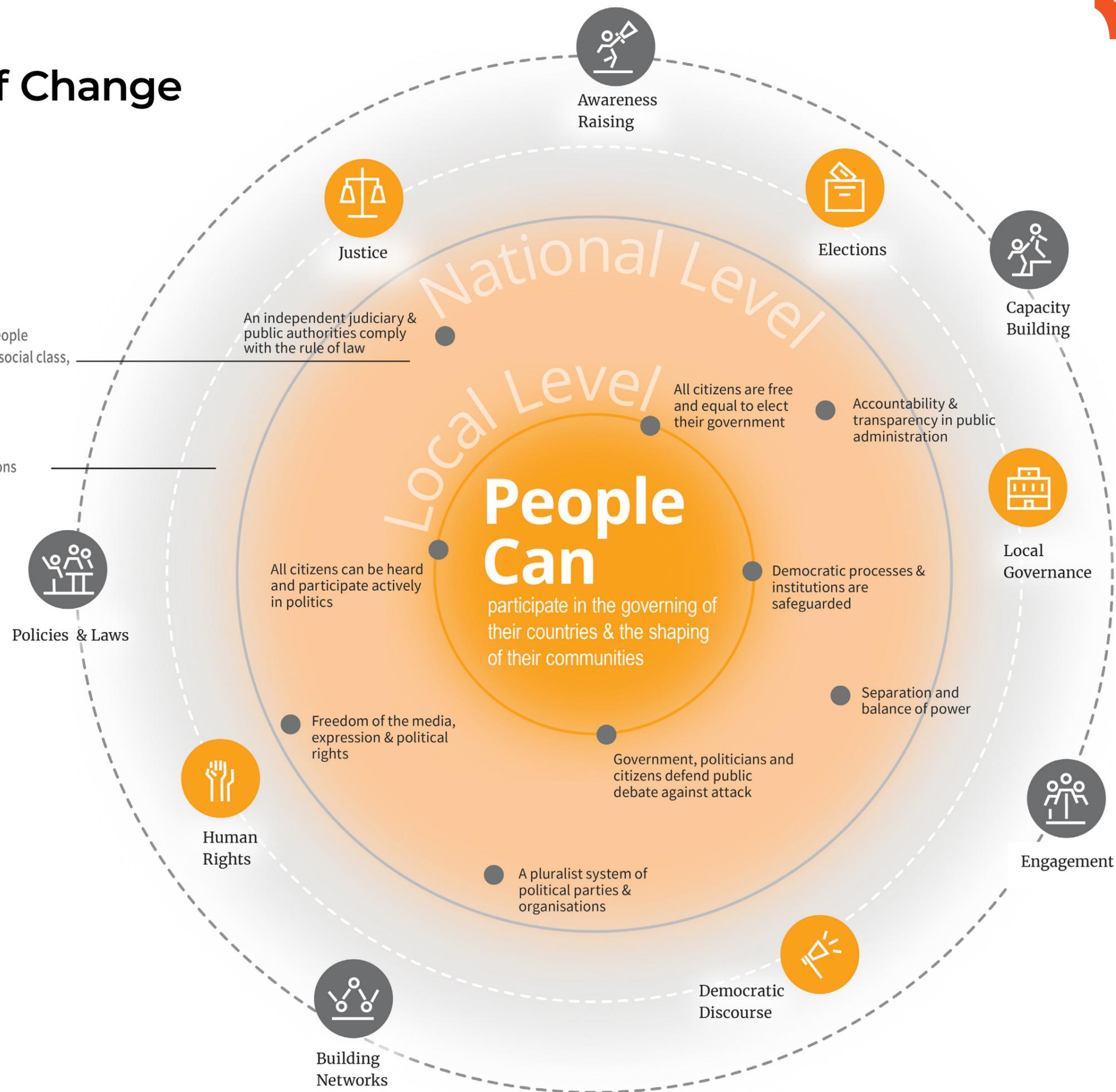
Our Theory of Change

Democratic change

DRI envisions a world where all people regardless of gender, ethnicity or social class, can participate in democracy.

Institutional change

"People make change, but institutions are needed to sustain it".



Our impact goals

Justice



- Constitutional reform engages diverse stakeholders
- Compliance with constitutional principles & international standards
- Accountable & effective legal frameworks
- Strengthened civil society capacity & engagement in reform processes

Elections



- Compliance with international standards
- Effective legal frameworks & election administrations
- Citizen groups engaged in election observation
- Social media included in election assessments

Local Governance



- Decentralisation reform is informed by international best practice
- Citizen participation in local democracy
- Local public service delivery draws on good governance practices
- Accountable local elections

Democratic Discourse



- Citizen groups engage in monitoring online & offline discourse
- Democratic discourses are promoted by government & citizens online and offline
- Polarised discourses are challenged by government & citizens
- Governments & tech companies safeguard democracy online

Human Rights



- Compliance of governments with domestic & international obligations
- Effective human rights commissions
- Civil society report & advocate for human rights
- Governments & citizens are aware of their political rights

DRI's Assumptions

The assumptions that inform our work are based on international law and globally agreed principles of democracy. These principles of democracy guide our work and engagement with partners and stakeholders. Our foundational paper, *Essential Elements of Democracy*, outlines our approach and guides our work on supporting institutional and democratic change. When we work on new areas, we always establish the international legal framework and explain our fundamental assumptions.

DRI envisages democracy as the only acceptable form of government based on justice and the rule of law, with legislation applying fairly and equally to everyone and where governments and politicians will be responsible and held accountable through democratic elections, courts, free media and other checks and balances. Through this, our change pathways assume that institutions will be strengthened, and governments, politicians and citizens will promote democratic processes and defend public debate and democracy against threats.

Democracy is also based on rules; the rule of law is an integral part of democratic change. While there are varying definitions of the rule of law and it is expressed differently across different legal cultures, democracy is based on legal procedures that provide justice to citizens and the legal foundations of a state in the form of constitutions, ensuring democratic processes and that institutions are safeguarded. The rule of law means that people live under a clear framework of applicable and enforced laws. It also means that laws are introduced following a democratic process and respect human rights.

Equality is integral to democracy, including the equality between gender, religious, ethnic, and socio-economic groups, and all people regardless of different ages, abilities, national or social origin. Greater inclusiveness is vital for advancing democratic change and human rights, allowing all people to be heard and participate actively in politics.

People make change, but reforms to institutions based on globally agreed principles of democracy are needed to sustain democratic rights and standards. DRI intertwines policy at the national level with

initiatives and actions at grassroots levels based on the assumption that people do not work for change alone. They need organisations: parties, media, civil society organisations, government, courts. Democratic and institutional change is complex and unpredictable. Citizens can change institutions, and institutions can become destabilised. If a country's institutional practices are grounded in globally agreed principles of democracy, however, there will be space for citizens and people to access and use their political rights, freedoms and human rights to effectively participate in the governing of their countries. People shape the foundations on which democratic institutions are built.

Global rules work differently in different contexts. To have impact, DRI works on the ground, closely with local partners. Local actors preserve and expand democratic space, and safeguard long lasting democratic processes.

An open and pluralistic public debate is essential for democracy. That debate can be threatened when society becomes extremely polarised. It can also be threatened by manipulation and misinformation. Understanding and exchanging about threats to public discourses strengthens government and citizen groups' safeguarding mechanisms against these risks.

More details can be found in our [organisational strategy](#), and in the [overview of DRI's core publications](#).

What?

Theories of change are the ideas and hypotheses ('theories') organisations have about how change happens. It is a way of thinking (an overall approach), a process (doing a ToC analysis/enquiry) and a product (the result of a ToC process, such as a theory of change diagram).

It provides a holistic approach on how change happens. By identifying proposed causal links and assumptions that inform our work and project design, it allows us to assess and reflect what role DRI can play in bringing about change: safeguarding and promoting democratic processes.

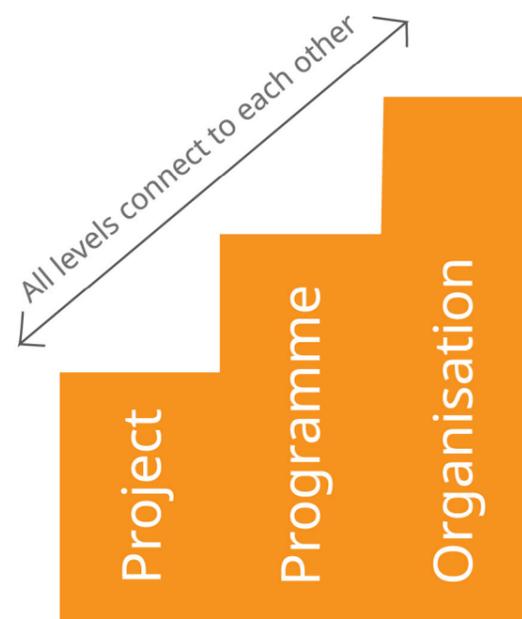
Theory of change is used for thinking about change at different levels, ranging from a global organisational strategy to a project level theory of change.

A theory of change approach entails that staff members and organisations reflect and make explicit their theories of change and the assumptions underlying their thinking. For instance, it is assumed that the political rights of citizens are improved by a government applying democratic standards and principles, but these theories are based on and are influenced by international best practices and organisational assumptions that underly DRI's strategic thinking.

Our ToC

DRI envisions a world where people can participate in the governing of their countries and the shaping of their communities. This is presented in the vision statement in our theory of change diagram and is the 'significant change' all our work contributes towards.

To create change and contribute towards this vision, our theory of change is based on the view that institutions are critical for safeguarding and promoting long-lasting democratic processes. People make change, but institutional change preserves it. If a country's government's or institutions' practices are grounded in globally agreed principles of democracy, this provides the space for people and citizens to access their political rights, freedoms and human rights to effectively participate in the governing of their countries. This democratic change allows citizens to be heard, participate in politics, and be free to elect their government, thus enabling them to participate in the governing of their countries and the shaping of their communities.



Through people and citizens being actively engaged in politics, this in turn ensures that they are vigilant in the defence of institutions providing open, accountable, constitutional and representative democracy that works for people, and that governments are accountable to their citizens. People shape the foundations on which democratic institutions are built. This two-way change pathway is reflected in DRI's theory of change diagram: **we stand for democratic processes and institutions and work with all stakeholders towards ensuring that citizens play a role in shaping their country.**

DRI's approach is based on a firm conviction that essential democracy standards, such as equal rights and fundamental freedoms for all, democratic elections, an independent judiciary and free media, agreed in and protected by international law, are non-negotiable.

DRI contributes to this change and strengthens these elements by focusing on five key themes of democracy: **Justice, Elections, Local Governance, Democratic Discourse and Human Rights.** Across these five thematic areas, we support and engage stakeholders who are working to build, preserve and defend democratic and accountable institutions. The impact diagram above outlines the various intended outcomes that together create the pathways to achieve the desired impact of our two change areas (democratic & institutional).

By working at both the national and local grassroots level, DRI uses five intervention approaches in our projects defined as output¹ and outcome² areas: **Awareness, Capacity, Engagement, Building Networks and Policies & Laws.** DRI's output and outcome areas are not hierarchical but interlink, and when directed at DRI's areas of intervention, guide the design of all our projects. Through this approach, DRI's global work is embedded in our theory of change and organisational strategy. Please see DRI's MEL Manual for further details.

Why?

When embedded in an organisation's strategy, the theory of change offers a common narrative that reflects an organisation's values, approaches and strategy to achieving impact. A theory of change process considers what assumptions an organisation is making when reflecting how change happens and what research and evidence exists to support this.

Unlike the traditional approach of a project Logframe, which focuses on assumptions about external conditions, a theory of change approach articulates assumptions underlying the strategic thinking of an organisational strategy or project design.

DRI's global theory of change serves as a guide for projects, country office strategies and helps us to measure our impact, outcomes and outputs across our thematic areas of focus. This supports our project level MEL to link to DRI's dimension of change, helping to ensure our MEL framework is coherent and change focused.

A theory of change approach is not about predicting change and it can't promise to deliver intended outcomes. It is an approach that enables staff members and organisations to better understand the approach they are apart of, in order to support change in a strategic and responsive way.

¹ An output is the direct, tangible result, service or product delivered by a project.

² An outcome is the direct effect of the project which will be obtained at medium term and which tends to focus on institutional changes or changes in awareness and behaviour resulting from a project.