

**The Baring Foundation
Strengthening the Voluntary Sector
Programme**

**Theory of Change and
Monitoring and Evaluation Framework**

Summary Paper

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Purpose of the Paper

In March 2015 The Baring Foundation adopted a new focus for its Strengthening the Voluntary Sector Programme of supporting effective use of the law and human rights based approaches by the voluntary sector in the United Kingdom. It is likely this will remain the focus for at least five years, until 2019 and if successful potentially beyond this.

The purpose of this document is to set out The Baring Foundation's theory of change for the programme and how the programme will be evaluated.

A theory of change is a tool that maps the pathway from the need an organisation is trying to address, the activities it will undertake to address identified need to the changes that it is hoped will happen – the outcomes. The purpose of developing the theory of change is not only to help The Baring Foundation in being an effective grant maker. It is also to assist its grantees in thinking through their own approach to addressing disadvantage and discrimination and better inform the voluntary sector as a whole as regards effective use of the law and human rights based approaches.

The STVS programme goals are very broad and long term. It is difficult to measure the impact of a relatively small programme on the national stage where there are many other actors and a complex and continually changing context. However, it is possible to assess the impact of the programme - the difference it is making.

The theory of change developed in this paper is a hypothesis of how the programme is intended to work, which in turn provides a template for the evaluation approach and data collection. It has been developed in the knowledge that the programme is made up of grant making and thought development activities which, it is hoped, will be integrated through supporting innovative projects and new thinking in this area. The evaluation has been designed to capture the full range and depth of this programme approach. This theory of change and evaluation approach is likely to evolve throughout the lifetime of the programme, integrating the contributions and input of others as well as lessons that emerge over time.

1 Strengthening the Voluntary Sector Programme

In 1996, the Baring Foundation launched the Strengthening the Voluntary Sector (STVS) programme. This programme funds development work aimed at supporting organisations to be efficient and effective.

After a review The Baring Foundation agreed in March 2015 a new aim for the STVS programme - to support effective use of the law and human rights based approaches (HRBA) by the voluntary sector in the United Kingdom. It is likely that this will remain the focus of the STVS programme for at least 5 years until 2019 and, if successful, potentially beyond this.

The Baring Foundation sees the law and HRBA as important tools for the voluntary sector. They can provide a means to tackle directly the disadvantage and discrimination faced by vulnerable people and to create and protect the space in which voluntary organisations operate, helping to safeguard the freedom of purpose, action and voice of the sector as a whole. There are great examples of voluntary sector organisations which have used these tools effectively in these ways.

However, use of the law and HRBA is far from consistent across the voluntary sector and many organisations see no link between these tools and their purpose, strategy and activities, or are wary of using them. This programme aims to boost engagement and to support organisations within the broader voluntary sector to make effective use of the law and human rights based approaches.

This new programme is a collaboration with The Legal Education Foundation which, in addition to making a financial contribution, is open to making grants aligned to the current programme aim.

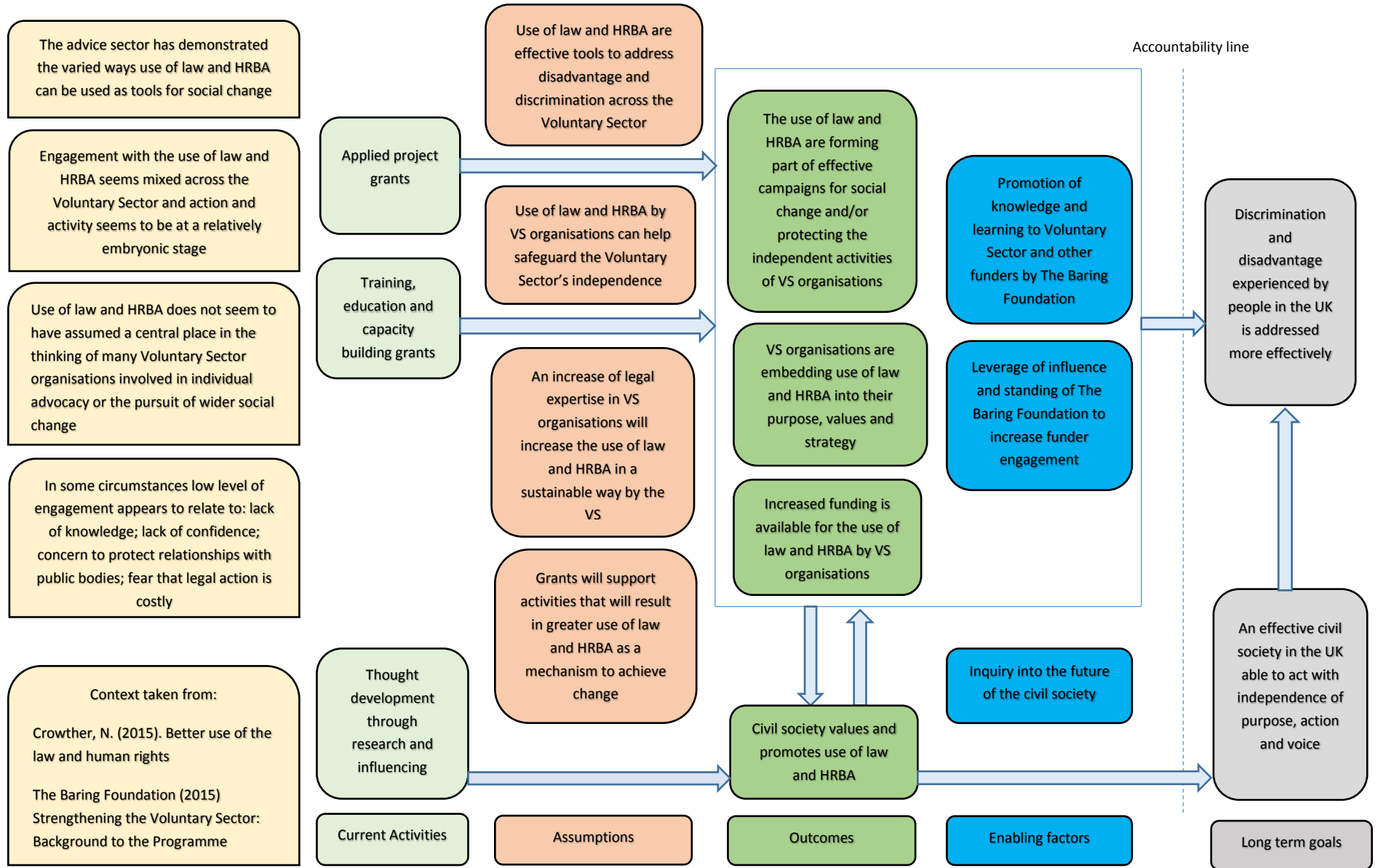
2 Theory of Change

2.1 Overview and Summary Flowchart

As part of the process of developing an evaluation approach for the STVS programme, a theory of change was developed. A theory of change is a tool that maps the pathway from the need an organisation is trying to address, the activities it will undertake to address identified need to the changes that it is hoped will happen (outcomes).

Theories of change make explicit the assumptions that lie behind the reasoning for programmes and therefore more testable. A distinction is also made between the outcomes the programme has direct influence over and longer term goals that can only be achieved with the contribution of other actors or environmental factors. In the flowchart below this distinction is indicated by an accountability line.

Strengthening the Voluntary Sector Programme: Theory of Change



2.2 The Assumptions

There are a number of assumptions underpinning the STVS programme. These are:

- use of the law and HRBA are effective tools to address disadvantage and discrimination across the voluntary sector;
- use of the law and HRBA by voluntary sector organisations can help safeguard the independence of the voluntary sector;
- an increase in legal expertise of in voluntary sector organisations will increase the use of the law and HRBA in a sustainable way by the voluntary sector; and
- grants will help support activities that will result in greater use of the law and HRBA by the voluntary sector as the mechanism to achieve change.

It is intended that these assumptions will be tested and further explored as the programme rolls out as part of The Baring Foundation's thought development work. This will be taken forward through commissioning research, as well as hosting meetings and other events, and will contribute to the evaluation process as set out below.

2.3 The Grants Programme

In the first round of funding the majority of available funds resourced two new open funds which were open for applications from September to December 2015:

- **training, education and capacity building** – seed funding grants of up to £30,000 over six months to two years that support organisations to understand how their objectives can be achieved through use of the law or human rights based approaches; and
- **applied projects** – grants of up to £150,000 over three years to create new capacity for work that addresses specific discrimination or disadvantage and safeguards the freedom of purpose, action and voice of the sector, linking the skills of 'non-legal' and 'legal' organisations to enhance and complement campaigns for social change.

These funds, particularly given this is the first round of funding, were designed to encourage different approaches, test appetite for activity within the voluntary sector and inform future funding rounds.

The response received was significant, from all four countries in the UK, with over 250 applications received totalling over £22 million in requested funding.

Eighteen grants have been awarded, seven for applied projects and eleven for training, education and capacity building projects. Between them they cover a wide range of social issues and contemplate the use of a wide number of different mechanisms by which the law and HRBA can be used to tackle disadvantage and discrimination.

There is also some limited resource available for research and influencing work which The Baring Foundation will commission (in most cases) to contribute to thought development in this area through, for example, research, meetings and conferences. This area of work will be essential to exploring and testing the assumptions that underpin the programme.

2.4 The Outcomes

There are two long term goals of the programme which link closely with the overall purpose of The Baring Foundation:

- disadvantage and discrimination experienced by people in the UK is addressed more effectively; and
- an effective civil society in the UK able to act with independence of purpose, action and voice.

Outcomes are the specific changes sought through the activities associated with the STVS programme and which are achievable within the envisaged 5 year lifespan of this particular focus on use of the law and HRBA by the voluntary sector.

These are:

- the use of law and HRBA are forming part of effective campaigns for social change and/or protecting the independent activities of voluntary sector organisations;
- voluntary sector organisations are embedding use of law and HRBA into their purpose, values and strategy;
- increased funding is available for the use of the law and HRBA by voluntary sector organisations; and
- civil society values and promotes use of the law and HRBA.

3 Monitoring and Evaluation

3.1 Background and Approach

The evaluation process has been designed with a primary focus on identifying lessons about how to work towards the long term goals of the programme. This is with a view to informing not just the future grant-making of The Baring Foundation but also a broader analysis of how the voluntary sector can be best supported to tackle disadvantage and discrimination and protect its independence.

Specifically, the process will focus on the collection and assessment of evidence to address the following evaluation questions:

- To what extent were the assumptions underpinning the programme correct?
- To what extent has progress been made towards the STVS programme outcomes?
- What has been distinctive or different about the contribution of the applied projects versus the education, training and capacity building grants?
- What thought development has The Baring Foundation contributed towards the achievement of the programme outcomes?
- What has been the key lessons from the programme in terms of:
 - the most effective approaches?
 - the main challenges?
 - any unintended consequences or unforeseen impacts?
- What has been the impact of the external environment?

- Are there issues around sustainability for the programme aims and how could these be addressed?
- How well has The Baring Foundation supported its grantees through the grant-making programme?
- In the context of what has been learned to date, what are the practical and strategic implications and how should these be addressed?

In seeking to answer these questions the evidence base will include not just an assessment of the grants made by The Baring Foundation but also an overview of its commissioned research and policy influencing work likely to be aimed, in particular, at testing the assumptions underlying the programme's design.

3.2 Evaluation Process in Summary

On the understanding that the STVS programme is likely to continue for at least 5 years until 2019 with multiple grant rounds, the first phase of the evaluation process has been designed to consider all grants made within the context of the programme not just those made in 2016. It is recognised that not all funded projects will have completed at the envisaged evaluation points but data from them can nevertheless be taken into account.

While it is assumed that it is likely that the high level programme goals and outcomes will remain unchanged over this period, the evaluation process incorporates two reflection points to enable adjustments and changes to be made based on available evidence. These are:

- September 2016 based on evidence from a focus group discussion with grantees;
- mid - 2018 based on evidence from an externally commissioned mid-term evaluation which will take stock and reflect on the programme and evaluation questions approximately 18 months on from the award of the first round of grants and draw on information from other grants rounds to the extent this is possible and externally commissioned research.

A final evaluation is envisaged, most likely in the last year of the programme in mid-2019, although it could take place later if it is thought desirable for all funded projects to have concluded before evaluating them. This will be focussed on the cumulative learning and key lessons for the wider policy arena in terms of grant-making and how these might be shared. It is too early to outline the best way to structure this final stage of this evaluation so the evaluation process outlined in this document details the first two stages only. The final evaluation process should be set up after the mid-term evaluation after which time it is likely to be clear how the remainder of the programme will roll out.

3.3 How to address the Evaluation Questions and Assess Impact

Outcomes	Indicators	Measures
An evidence base of how the use of law and HRBA can form part of effective campaigns for social change and/or protect the independent activities of VS organisations	VS organisations (grantees and others) have employed and documented use of law and HRBA to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Empower individuals and groups to know and claim their rights; • Inform/persuade duty bearers to respect, protect and fulfil rights; and • Challenge stakeholders who fail to live up to their legal obligations 	Annual report from grantees on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How they and the organisations they support have used law/HRBA and associated outcomes Interviews with grantees Research commissioned by The Baring Foundation
VS organisations are embedding the use of law and HRBA into their purpose, values and strategy	An increase in the number of VS organisations (grantees and others) incorporating use of law and HRBA across their operation	Annual report from grantees on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The extent to which they and the organisations they support have incorporated use of law HRBA into their organisations Interviews with grantees Research commissioned by The Baring Foundation
Increased funding is available for the use of law an HRBA by VS organisations	VS organisations (grantees and others) have attracted funding for the use of law and HRBA from their existing funders or from new sources	Annual report from grantees on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sources and amounts of funding for new work incorporating use of law and HRBA being carried out by them and the organisations they support Structured interviews with a sample of key stakeholders, (eg other funders)
Civil society values and promotes the use of law and HRBA	The role of use of law and HRBA as a means of social change and protecting the independent activities of VS organisations is endorsed by key stakeholders Use of law and HRBA features positively in public debates about the VS	Structured interviews with a sample of key stakeholders and Bellwethers Literature review of changes to context/environment in which the programme is operating. Assessment/overview of research commissioned by The Baring Foundation testing programme assumptions and other research questions relevant to the programme.