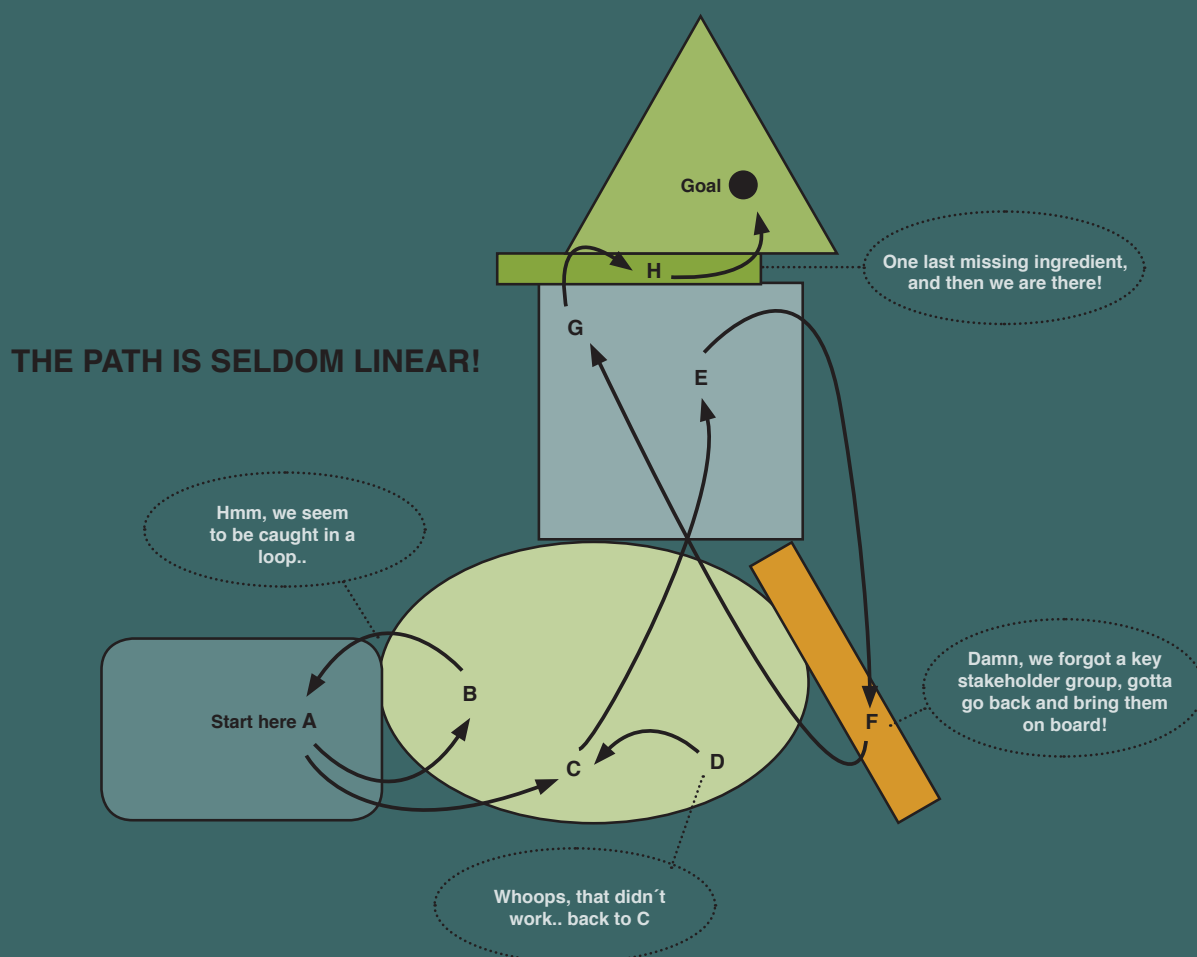


Theory of Change

- How to navigate towards positive change
in complex social settings

An inspirational guide for Development CSOs
March 2015



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Definitions

Throughout this guide we define a number of terms in the following ways:

Theory of Change

Theory of change is an approach to planning, learning, reflection and documentation of the change we make as development planners and practitioners. It is a theory in the sense that it represents the best idea we have about how we can support changes AND we recognize that these ideas need to be constantly tested and refined so that we can have a stronger theory next time (which also need to be tested).

A theory of Change explains why we think certain actions (a project, program and/or an organisational strategy) likely will lead to the desired change.

Preconditions

The building blocks of the change process. These are conditions of states of being, that must be in place for the change process to be reached. Preconditions must be achieved in order for the next logical task in the change pathway to be achieved.

Change pathways

A map that explains how we believe the long-term change are brought about by depicting the preconditions of change necessary to achieve the change. The pathway of change (map indicating the link between the preconditions) is the skeleton on which other elements (assumptions and activities) are added. The pathway summarizes the theory of an intervention - but does seldom tell the whole story.

Assumption

Assumptions explains why an intervention makes sense (in a given time). An assumption is something that is accepted as true or likely to happen. They underpin our understanding of how change works, and why you believe that a sequence of changes will actually influence positive changes. Being explicit about our assumptions also helps identify gaps and unmet needs, including additional necessary activities or actors that should be engaged.

Acronyms

AFPPD	Asia Forum of Parliamentarians for Population and Development
CCD	Climate change and development
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
CDKN	Climate change and Development Knowledge Network
DANIDA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Denmark – International Development Cooperation
EU	European Union
ILO/IPEC	International Labour Organisation
LFA	Log Frame Approach
M&E	Monitoring and evaluation
NGO	Non-government Organisation
RAM	Resource Allocation Model
ToC	Theory of Change

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The development sector is buzzing with yet another ‘new’ idea, Theory of Change. There are a number of reasons for this:

- o There is increasing pressure from donors and funders to demonstrate successful long-term impact. This has stimulated many organisations to look for new and better ways to represent what they do, so that they can demonstrate the impact of the efforts more effectively
- o As development professionals, we are working in ever more complex areas of social change. These days we are much more “hands off” than we used to be. We are now more likely to be working through partners, building capacity, conducting advocacy campaigns etc. We are beginning to recognize that the frame approach to planning and evaluation falls short in being able to capture and represent this complexity effectively
- o There is a growing body of funders and practitioners who believe that Theories of Change will reform the way that organisations plan for and assess their development efforts. They believe that the approach enables staff and partners to focus more directly on long-term changes rather than project-focused outputs and outcomes; and helps them to direct their energies more clearly.

The result is that an increasing number of organisations are eager to understand what Theory of Change is all about and if it can actually support them in practical and useful ways to improve the ways in which they currently plan and evaluate their efforts.

The Purpose of this guide

The purpose of this guide is to help managers and development practitioners to really understand what a Theory of Change approach involves and includes, how it can complement and strengthen already existing methods for planning and evaluation, and how to get started on this journey.

It introduces the basic principles of applying a Theory of Change approach to planning, monitoring and evaluation, and explains how these principles can be applied for organizational planning and strategizing, for programme planning, monitoring and evaluation or for individual projects.

It is important to note from the start that there is no such thing as ‘one theory of change’. There are as many theories of change as there are planners and development practitioners practicing the approach. In fact, applying a theory of change approach is a bit like applying principles of the French cuisine: There are a few basic principles to stick to, for it to be French cooking. The ways these principles are applied are as diverse as the number of cooks. Therefore, we have decided that this should be an inspirational guide rather than a set of recipes. And we will refer to a Theory of Change approach through out this guide in order to highlight this fact.

We hope that the content will provide you with both the inspiration and practical guidance to apply these principles in your own work and where you find it most relevant. The hope is that when

applying the approach, you will improve organizational learning about how you can contribute to change, and that you will find it easier to assess the feasibility of your strategies and to document the results of your work.

How to use this guide

The guide includes the following chapters:

- **Chapter 1** provides a **general overview** of what a Theory of Change approach involves and includes; how and when to apply it at different levels; how it complements existing approaches for planning and evaluation (including a log frame approach); and different entry points for those who want to get started on this journey. It also highlights some of the benefits and challenges that others have experienced when applying the approach.
- **Chapter 2** focuses specifically on applying a **theory of change approach at an organisational level**. It provides an overview of how and when a Theory of Change approach can be applied at organisational level. It highlights some of the characteristics and challenges of both developing and using a Theory of Change approach at this level. It also describes how this approach links directly to DANIDA's new Resource Allocation Model (RAM) standards
- **Chapter 3** focuses on the application of Theory of Change **at programme and project levels**. It describes how the approach can help inform planning, the assessment of programme feasibility, impact monitoring and communication about a programme or project's contribution to desired change areas. A description of how the ToC approach relates to outcome mapping is provided too.
- **Chapter 4** offers guidance and inspiration on how to facilitate elements of Theory of Change in your own organisation or with partners. It provides guidance on how to get started and how to facilitate some elements of the process. It also provides links to some workshop methodologies

Please note:

You don't need to read the guide from the beginning to the end. The structure of the guide should enable you to read sections that are relevant to your situation and your specific needs and apply the ideas you get directly.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCING A THEORY OF CHANGE APPROACH TO SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

1.1 Why Theory of Change - because reality is complex!

Theory of change is not new: it originates from the 1960's and the work of Paolo Freire in enabling the poor and oppressed to have an active voice in their own development. It is a way of reframing development planning and evaluation so that the primary focus is on changes for our target groups rather than on what we plan to do.

See www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Theory_of_change

Development CSOs work in a complex and dynamic context that feed off uncertainty and a multi-diversity of relations. This fundamental fact has a direct impact on the social change and development processes that we work in as development CSOs.

"We need some archipelagos of certainty to navigate on this sea of uncertainty" (Morin, 1990)
The thinking-action focus of a Theory of Change seeks to identify those archipelagos' of certainty which enable us to navigate through the complex ocean of social change.

"A Theory of change allows us to organize our thoughts and configure abstractly - based on our knowledge and experience - those conditions needed to achieve the desired change in a given context." (Retolaza Inigo, 2011)

We can meet this complexity at different levels:

As development practitioners most of us are familiar with at least one of the following feelings or challenges:

- **Organisational:** How can we understand and report on our organisation's specific contribution to changes in people's lives?

Or

- **Programme:** How do I know, that the activities planned for my project will actually lead to the desired changed?

Or

- **On-going learning:** I have just received a report from my partner with lengthy descriptions of completed activities but little reflections about how these activities are likely to bring us closer to our objective and even less reflections about what has been learnt from what is being done. Is there a way to improve this way of reporting?

These questions are legitimate in their own right. Yet, they become even more important as donor demands and increased competition over scarce funds increase the need for evidence of relevance and effectiveness and results in social change work and as demands for new and innovative responses to climate change, poverty and armed conflicts.

Learning from the past so that we can improve our work for the future, documenting results of our work and arguing how our work will contribute to systemic change has become a dominant agenda in many social change contexts. Both for those who strive to make social change, alleviate poverty and promote the rights of millions of people across the world. And for those who fund the work.

1.2 Theory of Change – a definition

In project planning, as in life in general, we are guided by our own internal and implicit images – or mental models - of how the world works. These images guide our ways of thinking and acting. From how we raise our children to the way we plan the next country programme to promote women's rights in a developing country. What a ToC approach offers is an approach for critically reflecting on these internal or implicit mental models and for 'testing' them against our life experiences and lessons learnt. It forces us to make our implicit rationale – **our assumptions** - explicit. We are required to articulate how we think change will happen; how we can contribute; and the sequences of changes we expect to result from our activities and efforts.

If all of this is explicit and agreed, we can assess our progress against expected changes, learn from our failures and successes and ultimately become more relevant and effective in influencing positive changes for people with whom and for whom we work.

Theory of change is an approach to planning, learning, reflection and documentation of the change we make as development planners and practitioners. It is a theory in the sense that it represents the best idea we have about how we can support changes AND we recognize that these ideas need to be constantly tested and refined so that we can have a stronger theory next time (which also needs to be tested).

As with the many ways in which it is used, "Theory of Change" is also defined in numerous ways. The common elements however are summarised as follows:

- 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:
- It considers a programme or project within a wider analysis of how change comes about.
- It makes us explain our understanding of change – but also challenges us to explore it further.
- It is often presented in diagrammatic form with an accompanying narrative summary
- **The focus is on what we think will change, not on what we plan to do.**

1.3 Theory of Change – revolution or reform?

There is nothing very new about Theories of Change – we all have them!

All organisations, programmes or projects have their own implicit theories of change. They are, after all, what informs plans and decision-making. Adopting a ToC approach does therefore not necessarily imply a completely new way of operating, but it does encourage us to focus more explicitly what we want to change (rather what we plan to do); and to situate our own efforts in a bigger picture of change.

What we propose in this guide is far from a revolution of the way CSOs and other development agencies work. Rather it is an attempt to reintroduce a focus on the **why** and **how** questions in social change work and strategizing, and to downsize the focus on the **what** question a little.

Although organisational, programme and project strategies should be, and often are, informed by situation, context and power analyses, there is a tendency to move very quickly from this analysis to developing the plan: **what** should we do and what do we want to **achieve**? We then exert enormous efforts in monitoring and evaluating the “whats ” (outputs) and the achievements (outcomes). Although this approach is useful management and accountability to donors, it is very narrowly focussed on the success of our individual efforts. It fails to consider these efforts in the context of the bigger picture of change.

If we could invest more time in really understanding **how change happens**, in the political, economic and social contexts in which we are working; and if we worked with staff and partners to agree **our specific roles in this change process** and how and why we should invest our efforts, and if we planned our strategies so that they **focussed primarily on specific changes for target groups**, we would be in a much stronger position to understand how relevant and effective our efforts really were in terms of contributing to changes in people's lives. We would then be in a position both to measure our own progress against plans (the whats and the achievements) AND the “**so whats?**” We did what we set out to do: so what difference did it make to the lives of the people we want to support?

Introducing a Theory of Change approach to your work does absolutely not mean that you will have to reject all well-established procedures for planning, monitoring or reporting.

They are relevant and necessary. What it will offer is a systematic approach which enables both deeper analysis about how change happens and your specific role in this process; and a very practical way of being able to critically reflect on the effectiveness of your efforts and contributions to desired changes. It enables you to make stronger and more robust plans about what you will do and what you will achieve.



"Dear Mr Gandhi, We regret we cannot fund your proposal because the link between spinning cloth and the fall of the British Empire was not clear to us."

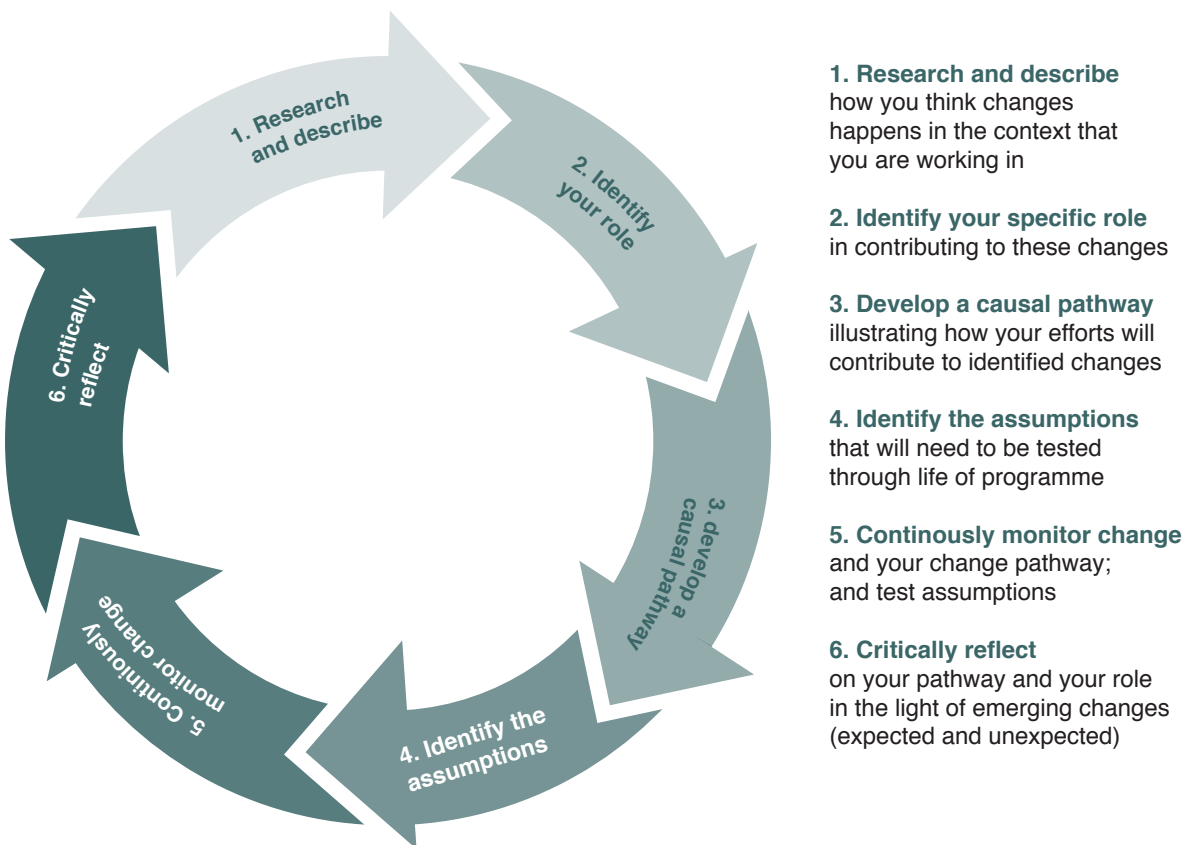
Written by M. M. Rogers and Illustrated by Arif M. Fauzi, Wahyu S., Ary WK
Creative team for Search for Common Ground in Indonesia

1.4 The ToC approach - Six steps towards improved planning, monitoring, learning, and communicating about our contributions to change

A Theory of change approach demands that we articulate how we think we can contribute to change, that we monitor if change happens the way we thought and with the effects we had anticipated, and that we adjust our interventions and thinking about change according to our lessons learnt.

The approach that we promote in this guide includes 6 steps as illustrated in the 'ToC planning and reflection cycle' outlined below. This is a generic approach that can be useful no matter whether you will apply ToC for a single project, for a programme or for organisational purposes. It can be applied in both the development and the humanitarian sector. We will discuss how to apply the approach to the different levels later (see section 1.6), but here we will focus on explaining the six steps of 'the ToC planning and reflection cycle'.

Model 1: The Theory of Change Planning and Reflection Cycle I



The six steps of in detail:

Step one: Research and describe how you think change happens

At whatever level we are working, we need to be guided by a clear vision of the change(s) we want to see in a particular area/context. We then need to understand what it would actually take for this vision to be realised. In this step, we are exploring the big picture of change, and considering all the actors and factors that might influence its success positively or negatively. Clearly, these change processes will differ enormously from one context to another. Depending on the context, any or all of the following may be key drivers or indeed, key barriers to change: legal change, change in the way governments implement laws, the way grassroots support structures address an issue or how the problems to be addressed are reflected in social norms or public discourse. We need this analysis, and a joined up agreement with key stakeholders about how change happens in these contexts before we plan our interventions.

There are a number of potential levels of analysis when thinking practically about social change and defining pathways for change. From global change to change at organizational level or individual level.

One way of understanding the different levels of applying a ToC approach is to look at the targets of the intended change process¹:

- **Structural and systemic** changes are often the primary organizational focus of development agencies as they strive to reduce global poverty, promote sustainable development or international human rights.
- To facilitate such change, organizations support programme interventions that aim to **change relationships** between stakeholders e.g. 'rights holders' and duty bearers' in conflicts over resources and opportunities to participate in decision-making processes.
- To facilitate and challenge relationships between those in power and those without, development actors engage in empowerment and capacity building efforts to change feelings, perceptions, behaviours and motivations of **individual participants** or **civil society organizations**.

Step two: Defining our role in contributing to change in our context.

This is the point where we can begin to think about how and where we can most relevantly contribute to desired changes. We need to look at the bigger picture of change (above) and based on an analysis of our strengths, capacity, resources and ability to influence or achieve change, we can identify a clear and relevant role for our efforts in the identified change process. In order to do this, we should be clear about how we can make direct contributions (direct actions with particular target groups), indirect contributions (through working with/alongside others, networking, advocacy etc.) and where we have no influence in the change process (this is key – we need to

recognize that, some changes need to happen even if we can't do anything about them. If they don't happen, we need to be aware that our own efforts are compromised).

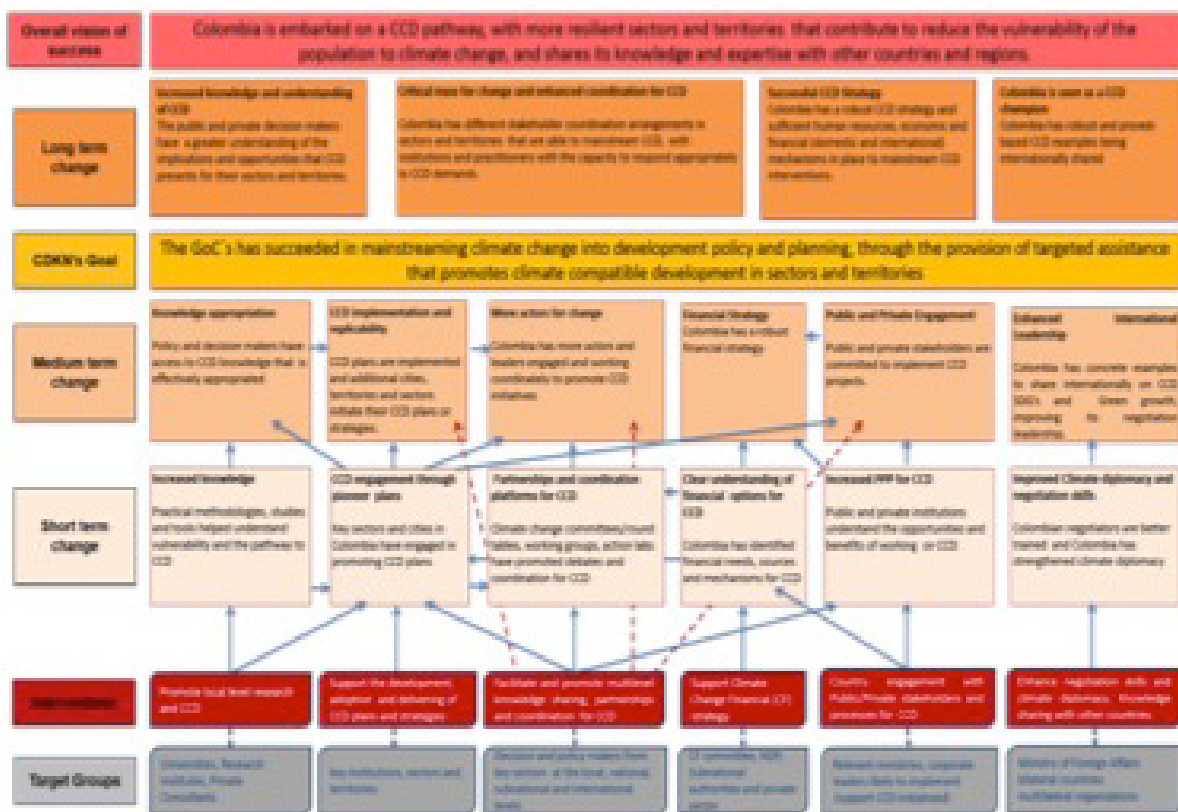
Step three: Develop a change pathway which illustrates how your efforts will contribute to achieving or influencing desired changes for your target groups.

Change pathways relate directly to your understanding of how change happens (first component). They describe in detail your unique ways of understanding and addressing these issues, including:

- *Who you work with?*
- *How you work with them?*
- *What changes, or sequence of changes do you hope to achieve or influence?*
- *How these changes link to and support each other?*

Change pathways help us make our implicit thinking about change explicit and test the logic of our thinking. The diagram is always accompanied by a short narrative that provides essential background information and the assumptions that will need to be tested. Please see page 12 for the essential questions that you need to answer in order to develop this narrative.

Title of diagram:



Haibel Vogel and Maureen O'Flynn

Step four: Identify assumptions that need to be tested during the life of the programme

An assumption is something that is accepted as true or likely to happen but there is no proof (yet) They underpin our understanding of how change works, and **why** you believe that a sequence of changes will actually influence positive changes. Being explicit about our assumptions also helps identify **gaps** and unmet **needs**, including additional necessary activities or actors that should be engaged.

For example, we implicitly think that as a result of training, target groups will have improved knowledge skills and/or attitudes. We all know that this is not necessarily the case: The training may be inappropriate. The wrong people may be there for the wrong reasons. In these cases, the assumption that these key people will have and apply greater knowledge, attitudes and/or skills proves false and compromises the whole plan.

We may also detect activities that are extraneous, weak or fail to contribute to achieving the overall goal.

In order for assumptions in our change pathways to be useful for testing our beliefs and the validity of causal links we propose the following

- **Make sure that each assumption is explicit. Write them as belief statements**
- **Understand what it is about, e.g. context or cause and effect**
- **Link each assumption to a specific aspect of the pathway.**

Step five: Continuously monitor change and change pathways, and test your assumptions

As stated earlier, we develop our pathways based on our best understanding of how change happens **at one point in time**. But we know that the contexts in which we are working are constantly changing (for example, a key minister is replaced; there is a local/national election; there is a change of leadership in the partner organisation; drought mitigation takes priority over everything etc.) We to reflect on and adapt our theory of change in the light of changing circumstances; through understanding how other actors and factors are helping or hindering the progress of our pathway.

As stated above, we also need to test our own assumptions to see to what extent they are holding true (and if they are proving false, to think about how to address this).

Step 6: Critically reflect on your pathway and your role in light of what you have learnt

This step provides an essential opportunity to reflect on the following questions: So in the light of the changing context, what we learned about how change happened, our own assumptions about change and the role we played in the process: Are we working with the right people in the right way? To what extent are planned changes actually taking place? Are they making a difference? What exactly did our efforts contribute (could be positive, negative unintended)? So what have we learned and how should we adapt our plans in light of this?

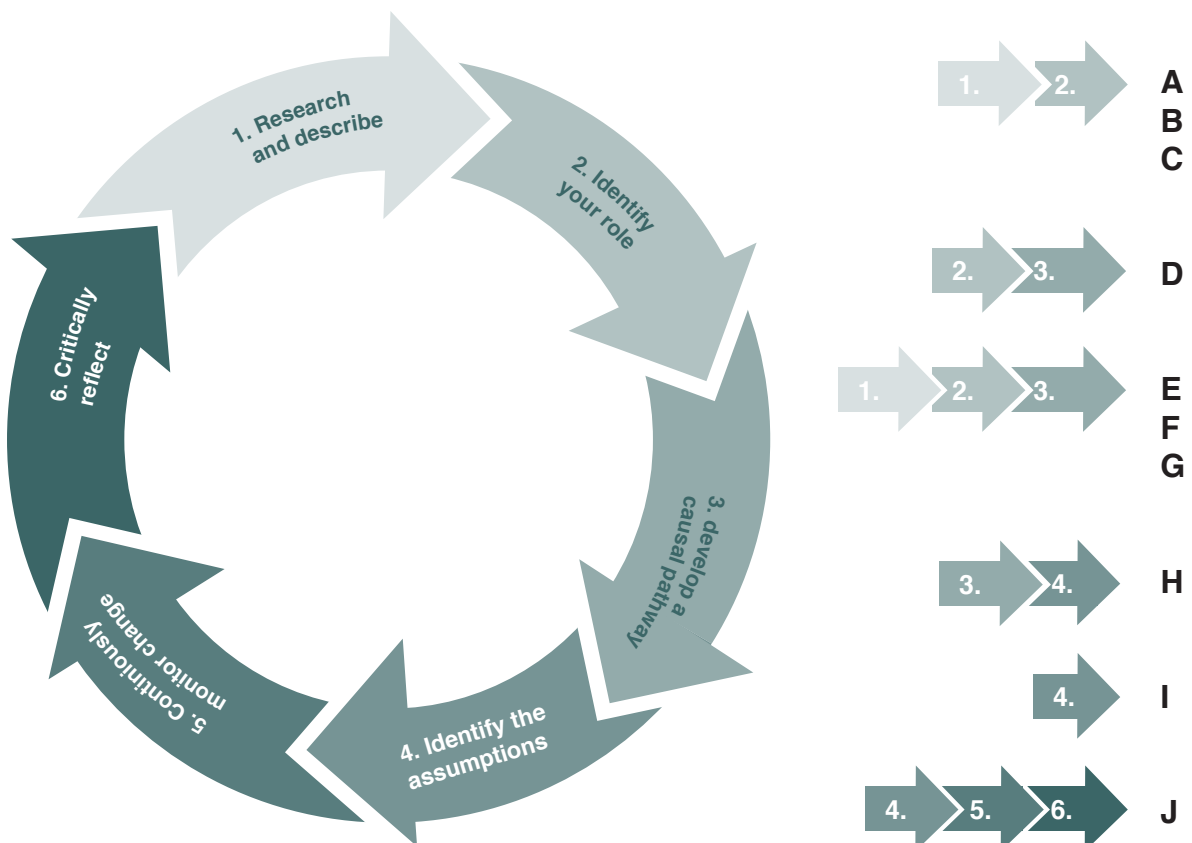
A simple framework for developing a Theory of Change

If you use the following ten points as headings to your narrative and you develop a narrative using participatory and consultative processes, you will be well on the way to applying a ToC approach to planning and critical reflection.

- A.** A summary of the key challenges and underlying causes that the programme seeks to address
- B.** Your overall vision for the programme
- C.** Your understanding of preconditions for successful achievement of this vision (including elements that you won't work on but you see as necessary preconditions)
- D.** An analysis of your own role and contributions in relation to point 3 above
- E.** Your own goal for this programme
- F.** A description of what you will do with whom
- G.** A description of the sequence of changes you would expect to see in both the short and medium term for different stakeholder groups; and how they link together and support each other (diagram)
- H.** A brief rationale for why you have opted for this particular way of working (in preference to other modalities) - including an analysis of potential strengths and weaknesses of the different options
- I.** A summary of any assumptions you have made and that you will need to test throughout the lifetime of the programme
- J.** A brief explanation of how and when your assumptions will be tested and how the results will be fed back into your plans

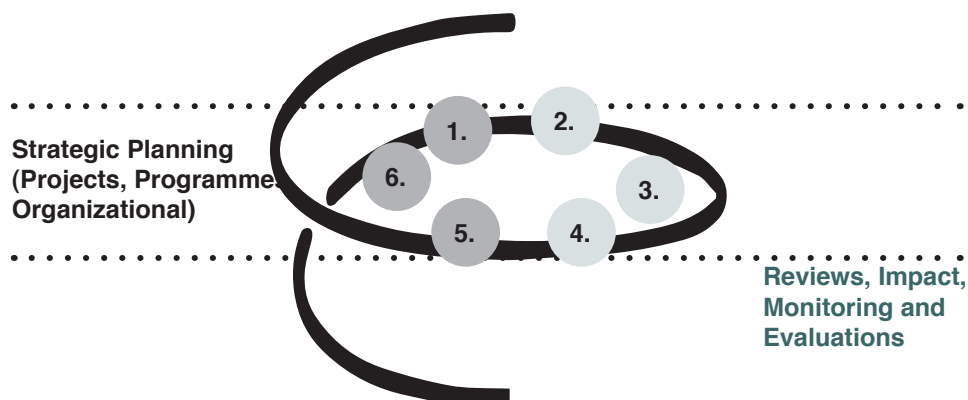
These questions fit into the six-step process described above:

Model 2: The Theory of Change Planning and Reflection Cycle II



1.5 Essential things to note about the ToC planning and reflection cycle

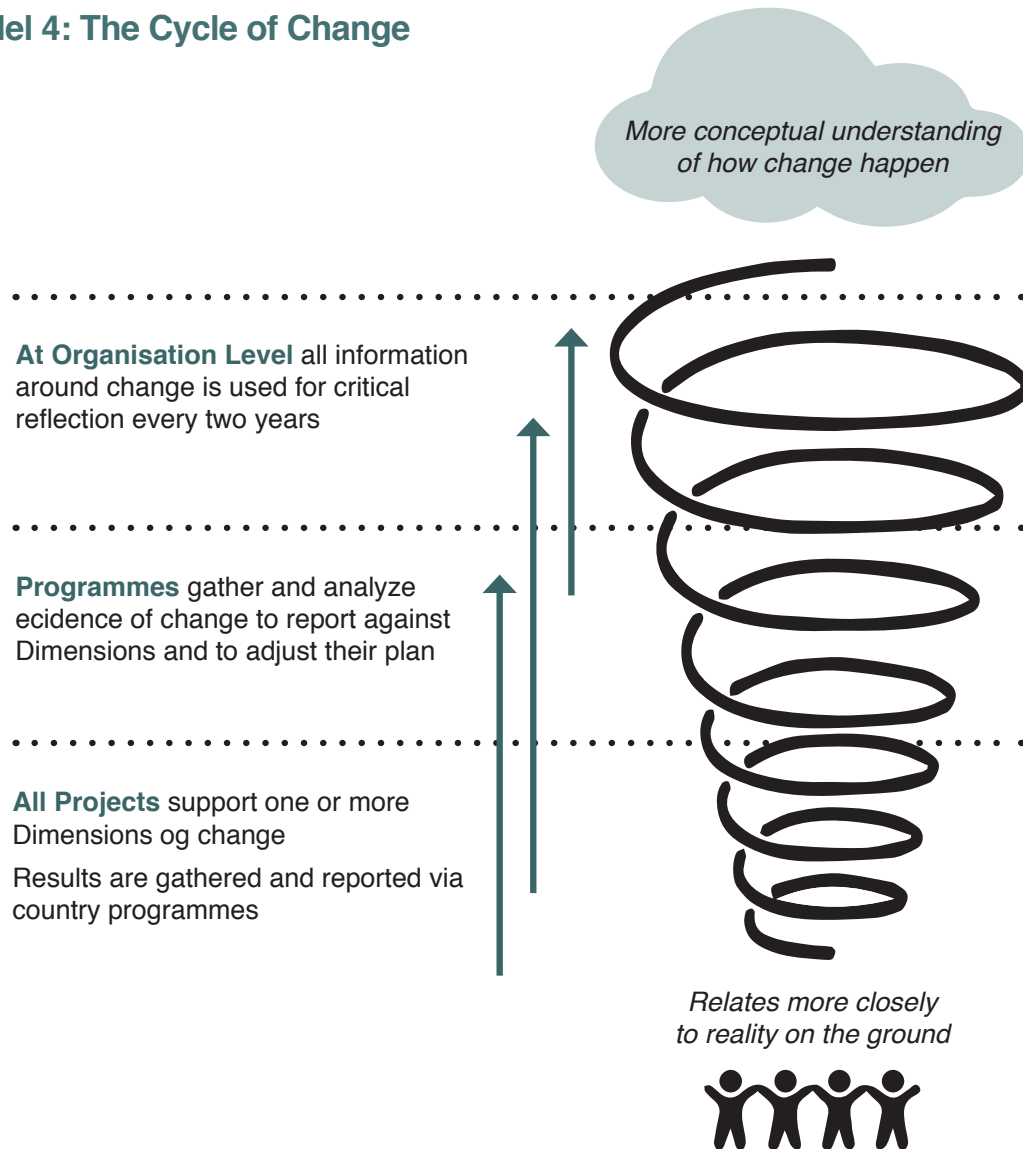
1. **The time it takes to go round the cycle depends on the nature and complexity of the context and the size and scope of the effort:** in a fast moving humanitarian situation for example, this cycle might be completed every three months. An organisational Theory of Change, which supports a new strategy, will run as long as the strategy does – maybe three to five years. A programme or project theory of change which supports empowerment of community groups to become agents of change in their own environment, will run as long as it takes for the intervention to strengthen the motivation, self-esteem, cooperation and campaigning skills of groups to enable them to act as change agents.
2. **This cycle needs to be carried out as a participatory or consultative process:** No single individual or small group can effectively work through this process in isolation (note: a small group can lead the process but not do it. Viewpoints from both internal and external stakeholders are needed in order to challenge, question, and agree. The more inclusive the process, the more robust the product will be. The more inclusive the process the more commitment you get to use your ToC for reflection about the change you make and your own role in it ... and, most importantly, your efforts in supporting and achieving long term changes for people on the ground are likely to be more effective.
3. **The cycle is not an ‘all or nothing’ approach.** The cohesion and logic of your programme or project documents, your understanding of how your work contributes to change and your ability to assess progress and relevance of what you do may improve, even if you ‘just’ decide to develop pathways to test the logic and cohesion of your programme or project. Or if you decide to conduct a theory-based evaluation on a programme or project planned and managed with an LFA approach.
4. There are different entry points for Theory of Change: It is possible to ‘enter’ the ToC planning and reflection cycle from any of the 6 steps. Organizations who are about to revise their organizational strategy may for instance reflect on how change happens (step 1), before they identify and describe their particular contribution, role and added value (step 2). Programme staff who are to evaluate the relevance and effect of a programme may conduct a ‘theory based evaluation’, start with step 4 and articulate assumptions in their programme, which the evaluation team would need to assess. What defines a Theory of Change approach is therefore not when or where you ‘enter’ the cycle. Rather a ToC approach is defined by the consistency with which we follow through and complete every step in the cycle over a continuum of time.



1.6 Applying ToC at three different levels

This six-step sequence applies to planning, evaluation and critical reflection and whatever levels you are working organizationally in relation to strategic planning; country or thematic programme planning and evaluation; or project planning (for larger projects that have several strands):

Model 4: The Cycle of Change



At whatever level ToCs are developed, they need to be able to “speak to each other”. Organizational strategies inform thematic and context related choices at programme levels. And programme strategies inform the choice of interventions at the project level.

Equally, critical reflection on theories of Change at Organisational levels depends heavily on data gathered and analysed at programme or project level where the real action with real people takes place.

Illustration: Theory of Change at different levels and baking cakes!

Let's think about the different levels of Theories of Change this in terms of baking cakes – it might shed some more light on this issue:

- Theories of Change at organisational level: this would be the introduction to cake making: **why people like to eat cakes, what's involved in baking them– methods and ingredients - and what's "special" about the way that your organisation bakes them**
- Theories of Change at thematic/programme level (e.g. advocacy education, livelihoods etc.): This would be based on the "special" ingredients and method that your organisation uses to bake cakes. Theories of change at this level would **provide a set of detailed recipes for different kinds of "cakes" from the more general list above**
- Theories of change at (country) programme/project level: **This is where the baking and eating of cakes actually takes place!** The recipes and methods described above need to be adapted to what people in this area actually like to eat: In some areas they might not like lemons, in others they crave sugar etc. There's no point in making a cake that no one wants to eat! You make your cake according to what people like to eat

In terms of evaluation and feedback, "the proof of the pudding (or cake in this case) is in the eating": people will eat the cake and give their opinion about it (too sweet, too dry, too rich etc.). **You will immediately adapt your recipes at local level so that more people will enjoy eating your cakes.** This information will travel back up the line so that the **different kinds of "cake recipes" (at thematic programme level) can be adjusted to take this information into account**, and the organisation can also consider to what extent it needs to **adjust its overall attitude to cake baking.**

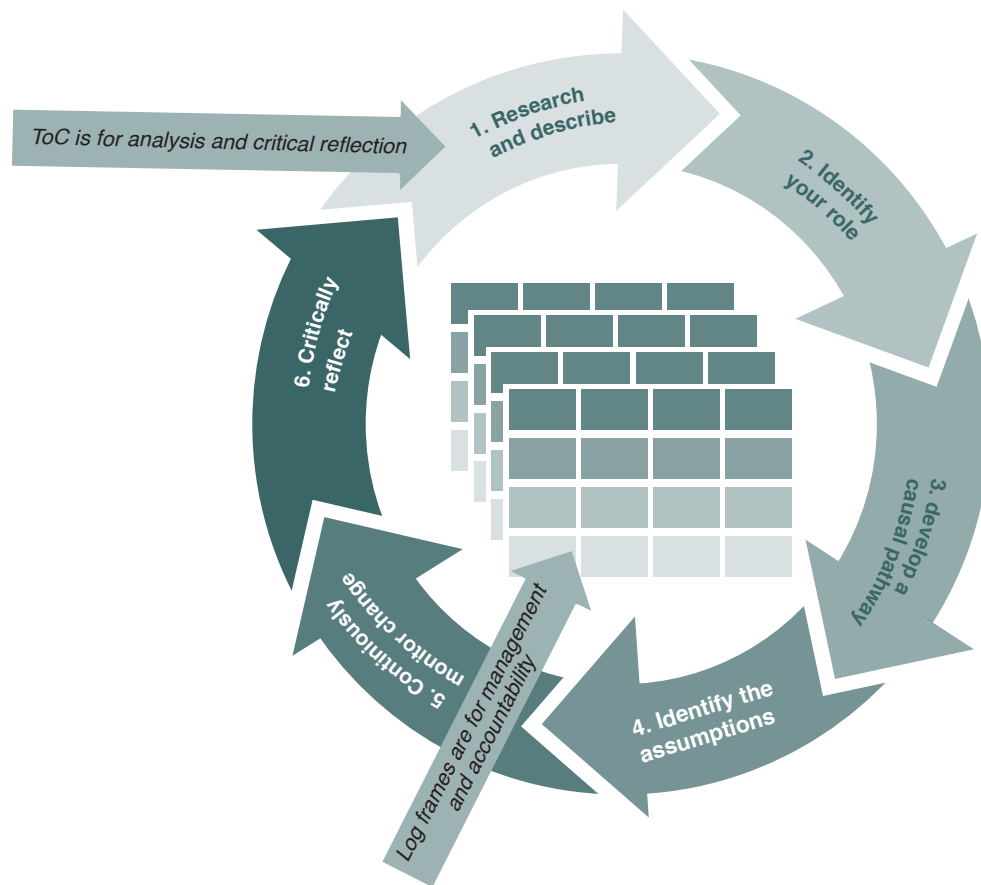
1.7 ToC or LFA? How do approaches relate?

Theories of change and Results Frameworks can be complementary approaches, which are mutually reinforcing:

Theories of change situate programme efforts in bigger picture of change . They encourage critical thinking and reflection about pathways of change and links between changes. They encourage you to articulate assumptions about how change happens and enable us to navigate our programmes forward effectively as contexts and results fluctuate and change around us. They are designed primarily for learning and improving effectiveness and relevance of our work.

Results frameworks and log frames describe how a planned sequence of activities will lead to intended results. They describe elements of specific strategy, programme or project from inputs to results, and are used both as a management tool, and as an accountability framework to report to donors about what we have done and achieved and for project and programme management (linking inputs and activities to planned outputs and outcomes).

Model 3: The Relationship between ToC and Results Frameworks



We need to be able to be accountable for the plans we have made AND THEREFORE we need to be sure that the plans we have made are the best possible plans in the circumstances. A theory of change approach to planning and critical reflection makes log frame planning and evaluation more robust.



It sometimes helps to think of the **Theory of Change approach as the “helicopter view”**: By constantly focussing on the big picture of change and reflecting on your efforts through that lens, you become more aware of other actors and factors that might support or hinder your efforts. In the helicopter, you are constantly surveying the terrain

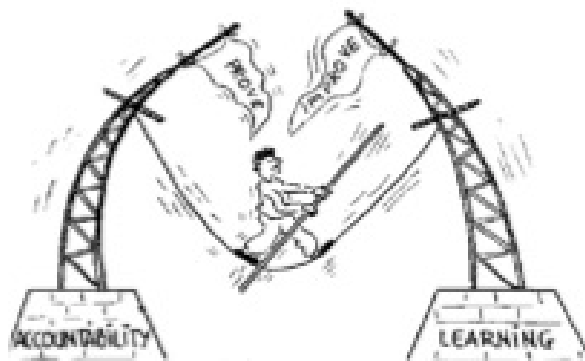


The log frame, on the other hand, is more like the “road view”. You are in a truck and required to travel from point a to point b on a prescribed route, whether or not the route remains open and leads to your eventual destination. While you are en route, you can never really see what obstacles there might be over the next hill. Wouldn't it be useful to be able to link up to that helicopter which can continually update you on road works, flooding, traffic jams so that you could get to your destination faster and more effectively...

1.8 How to work with a ToC approach and/or LF Approach

It's important to stress that there is no “blueprint” or one way to do apply ToC approaches, but it is essential to be able to be accountable both to donors and stakeholders and to learn about what worked well and where you could do better next time. These can be conflicting: We are under pressure to prove results, but we can't learn unless we are able to reflect on the strengths and weaknesses of the ways we have chosen to work. This being the case, it can be helpful to fulfil both demands through complementary processes. In some organisations, for example, the critical reflection process is conducted internally (to protect staff and partners) and the results are shared externally as appropriate. In other situations, it may be useful to share your learning with external donors and stakeholders to legitimize the changes you make in your planning.

Finding the right balance between accountability and learning may depend on the nature of your relationship with the backdonors and the partners involved.



If donors are too focused on grantees partners providing evidence and documentation for activities conducted and the outcome (changes seen) of these activities – and partners are too focused on complying with these demands, evidence and documentation will be provided on the number of activities conducted indeed. At the same time, there will be a risk that the partner will collect evidence supporting its own theory of change only, omitting data and experiences during programme implementation that may suggest that key assumptions in the programme strategy are flawed or that a more nuanced understanding of how.

Whether we develop a Change pathway or a Log Frame, or both, which is increasingly the case, the first three steps of the Theory of Change planning and reflection cycle (described on pages 8-10) are essential for effective and realistic planning. Thereafter, we need to be able to develop and implement systems which ensure that both accountability for current plans and learning for future plans will be included and will be used effectively (this relates to steps 4-6, described on pages 10-11).

a. Using a Theory of Change approach for critical reflection and LFA for management and accountability

Organizations who choose to use ToC primarily for critical reflection alongside their LFA (for accountability) will develop change pathways which focus more clearly on changes for target groups. **The identified sequence of changes should be framed as specific changes for specific target groups (for example: networks coordinate effectively; children demand their rights).**

b. Using a theory of Change approach instead of log frame approach

If you plan to use a ToC approach to measure progress and change as well as well as a critical reflection process, you will develop pathways with SMART objectives, outcomes, outputs and activities.

Organizations choosing to do so argue that these types of pathway are more flexible and provide more 'space' for adjustments according to lessons learnt, than a LFA in which outcomes and outputs are limited by a table template. Others find it easier to use pathways to communicate their results, milestones achieved, and how the milestones will lead them to the desired objective.

Note: if you use pathways in this way, you need to be able to find ways of critically reflecting on these paths in relation to changing drivers and barriers to change

We recommend that the systems designed for reporting progress against plans (log frame) and those designed for critical reflection (Theory of Change) are kept separate. If joined, the usefulness of both becomes diluted.

Idea for inspiration:

How to apply a ToC approach in your dialogue with partners using LFA

- 1) Read the project or programme LFA jointly with your partner.
- 2) Map activities, outputs and outcomes and link them in 'change pathways' so that the change logic becomes clear.
- 3) Insert 'missing links' (outputs or outcomes) to further strengthen the logic of your pathways – if you find 'steps are missing' in point 2 above
- 4) Discuss and identify your 'hidden assumptions'. Turn assumptions that are problematics into preconditions that the project should create.
- 5) Revise your LFA accordingly
- 6) Agree on a procedure for monitoring your pathways and assumptions during the time of project implementation.

1.9 What others have said about benefits and challenges of a ToC approach

As stated earlier, some organisations in both the North and the South have been using the Theory of Change approach for many years. It is worth learning from their experiences.

The following list summarises some of the perceived benefits of developing and using a ToC approach for staff and partners in both the North and the South

Some perceived benefits of applying a Theory of Change approach include the following. It:

- Builds **common understanding of how and why you do what you do**
- **Strengthens the clarity, direction, effectiveness and focus of programmes**
- Provides a **framework for review, learning and re-design**
- **Improves partnership**
- Supports **organisational development**
- **Helps people communicate** what they do so it can be more easily understood by others
- **Empowers people to become more active and involved** in programme design and implementation

Some of the key challenges that organisations often experience include:

- **Representing Theories of Change simply and meaningfully:** There is always a delicate balance between representing complexity and the dynamics of change. If it is too simplistic it becomes meaningless, but if it is too complex it becomes unworkable for those who are trying to understand and use the ideas
- Using Theory of Change approaches effectively for learning - especially if the Theory of Change approach is not aligned with other organisational processes and if specific times for reflection are not prioritized
- **Finding skilful and sensitive facilitators** to take them through the process in a spirit of learning and improving and challenging staff and partners to think in new and more innovative ways about how they might be able to contribute to changes more effectively.

The following three chapters will address some of these issues. They illustrate how organizations can apply a theory of change approach at different levels for planning and prioritization of their efforts, and for monitoring and evaluation of their work, for learning, and for developing more robust and more effective plans. They include specific examples of how organizations and programmes across the world have applied the approach in different ways and in different contexts.

CHAPTER 2

HOW TO DEVELOP AND APPLY A TOC APPROACH AT ORGANISATIONAL LEVEL

2.1 Introduction

In our recent experience from the Danish CSOs wanting to work with a ToC approach at an organisational level, they tend to be developed for one or more of the following three main reasons:

- Firstly, in response to a donor requirement: in order to apply for larger grants or multi annual funding, many donors are requiring that a theory of change is provided to support the “business case” for funding
- Secondly, and probably related to the point above, Theories of Change are currently very “fashionable”: organisations are aware that their colleagues and competitors are developing Theories of Change, and they feel a need to keep up with, or possibly keep ahead of, the game.
- Thirdly, one or a few members of the organisation have developed a clear understanding about how a Theory of Change approach can usefully support organisational learning and improved effectiveness, and they are keen to apply the approach to their planning and evaluation processes.

Whilst the first and second reasons can be useful drivers for organisations to produce a theory of change – or adopt a theory of change approach - at this level, it is the third reason that will push management and staff to actually apply them to planning and evaluation

2.2 What are the benefits of a ToC approach at organisational level?

If developed at the right time and with high levels of consultation, applying a Theory of Change approach at organisational level can serve both as developing a lead document and as a process which guides everything from strategy to allocation of resources and to communication.

At organizational level a ToC approach can also be a rigorous way of understanding and testing what difference your organisational efforts actually make and how we could be more effective.

In a nutshell, applying a ToC approach at organizational level helps us:

- Clarify and develop a joint understanding of our organisation's (unique) role in the change process; and how our efforts, combined with those of others, contribute to a sequence of changes
- Develop joint ownership and commitment to our work through all parts of the organisation
- Create a framework for robust analysis and evaluation which enables greater both opportunities for reflection and learning, and the ability to become transparent and accountable
- Communicate the rationale and highlights of our organisation's efforts to donors, partners and other stakeholders, succinctly and clearly

*"We believe we will be able to use the theory of change in many ways: as a means to explain to donors what we do, why, and how we learn; as a reference point by in-country teams to develop country programme (or project) theories of change; as an **aide memoire** in project planning ("What are the related activities taking place at each of the three levels? "Which of the five major changes are we working on?"); and in setting ToRs for impact assessments. We are hoping to ensure that our theory of change is a living document. We are encouraging each country programme to consider developing individual theories of change at country programme-level and possibly at project-level. One other important benefit of the ToC is that it gives us a new (clear and compelling) way to talk about Concern Universal, not only to donors, but to peers (such as our partners) and to colleagues".*

Concern Universal 2012

But, developing robust and useful theories of change at this level can be challenging: in an effort to synthesize the many complex elements and contexts that the organisation is operating in, the narrative and the illustrated pathways can sometimes become rather generic and simplistic, and therefore hard to use meaningfully. More often than not, they are used to promote the organisation, to provide top line messages, or to support fundraising. They are used less often for critical analysis and reflection

2.3 How a ToC approach fits with other planning and evaluation processes

All medium to large organisations invest significant time and resources in developing strategic plans, usually on a 3-5 year basis. A very pertinent question then is, "What else does a Theory of Change approach offer that we are not actually covering in the strategic plan?"

The answer is this: many elements of a Theory of Change are indeed included in the development of a new strategy, and in the document that is developed as a result. There will always be some sort of context and situation analysis, a vision, mission and values, a description of implementation strategies. This is all based on an implicit set of assumptions around organisational identity and ways of working. It should be stressed that any efforts to apply a Theory of Change approach at the organisational level, should build on what is already in existence.

Elements of a theory of change approach which tend to be weak or non-existent in organisational strategy documents include some or all of the following:

- Evidence of how research has informed organisational thinking about how desired change happens including an assessment of significant drivers and barriers to achieving or influencing these changes
- A strong rationale for why strategic choices have been taken that directly relates to the point above
- An indication of the sequence of changes that an organisation believes would lead to desired outcomes; the links between these changes; and an the assumptions that they make in proposing this sequence
- A clear plan for on-going monitoring and reflection of progress against this sequence of changes (as opposed to planned achievements), with a way of showing how this will inform future strategy

Idea for inspiration:

Use these bullet points as a check list against your current strategy to assess how well it reflects a theory of change approach.

To re-emphasize the point made earlier in this chapter, the theory of change can be seen as the conceptual piece, which informs the development of the strategy (it doesn't replace it).

In terms of the evaluation of organisational strategies (and building learning from projects and programmes back into future planning cycles) organisations often rely on “adding up” the sum total of information gathered through programme and project reports and evaluations, and annual reports. This works well as a reflection of organisational achievements against set plans, but it fails to support essential learning about the organisation's joined up efforts in terms of contributing to changes in the lives of their target groups and beneficiaries. The information gathered in this way, does not allow for interrogation of the vital “so what” questions: so, as a result of our efforts over this strategic period, what did actually change? For whom? How and in what ways were these changes significant to different target groups? To what extent, if any can we see that we have contributed positively to the lives of our beneficiaries? What was the extent and nature of our contribution? So what should we do differently in our next strategy?

A system for monitoring and reporting on progress against planned changes for different target groups across all programmes throughout the strategy period would address many of these issues. This analysis can then be aggregated up to support critical reflection at organisational level.

Theories of Change at different levels in CDKN - and how they are used to inform each other

Organisational level ToC:

- Provides an analysis and summary of CDKN's understanding of how change happens and its own role within this process
- Assumptions are tested every two years and the ToC is revised accordingly

Thematic programme level ToCs:

- Provide a more in depths analysis and summary of specific approaches to influencing change in policy and planning, climate finance, DRM and advocacy
- Assumptions are tested annually in conjunction with Country programmes

Country Programme ToCs:

- Specific to country context and time bound
- This is where the most substantial information and data is gathered and analysed Country Programmes include a systematic methodology developing change pathways, impact monitoring, testing assumptions and revising pathways on a bi- annual basis
- Outcome and organisational level assumptions are tested via individual countries and are then aggregated up

2.4 Applying a ToC approach to planning

What it will consist of:

In brief, a ToC approach at organisational level is likely to cover the following elements, in more or less detail:

- Analysis of problems and underlying causes that your organisation seeks to address
- Your organisation's overall vision of change
- Your analysis of how change happens in relation to the two points above (this refers to step 1 in the six steps described in Chapter 1, but it may also include step 6 in relation to your previous strategy – where you will have done some serious reflection about the extent to which you were working with the right people in the right way through the previous strategic phase)
- The ways in which your organisation can offer useful contributions (step 2). Note this will be informed by your mission and values; and a clear analysis of who/what else would need to be in place if your vision could become a reality
- An overview of your main ways of working, (both who you work with, how and where); and an illustration of a generic sequence of changes that you expect to see as a result (step 3)
- Why you believe that this is the most effective way of working; and the assumptions that you would need to test through the life time of the strategy
- How you will use the Theory of Change approach for reflection, learning and ensuring that you become more effective over time

The completed product often consists of a narrative summary (3-10 pages) and an annotated diagram.

See the following links for examples of Theories of Change with accompanying narratives:

<http://concern-universal.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/Concern-Universal-Theory-of-Change-Diagram.pdf>

<http://concern-universal.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/Concern-Universal-Theory-of-Change-Background-paper.pdf>

<http://www.espa.ac.uk/files/espa/ESPA-Theory-of-Change-Report.pdf>

http://r4d.dfid.gov.uk/pdf/outputs/mis_spc/Appendix_3_ToC_Examples.pdf

How to develop a Theory of Change

Developing a theory of change at this level requires significant investment of time, and an organisational appetite for a challenge and for change. It needs to be led by and have the full support of Senior Management if it is to be effectively embedded into the organisations plans and systems. If developed and used well, it is likely to result in changes to the ways in which the organisation currently monitors and evaluates strategy and programmes. It is worth waiting for a right moment so that you can develop a full and thorough process, rather than rushing into it in response to a demand or a good idea.

Decisions about process will of course depend heavily on the purpose and time available. It is worth taking time to think through how you will develop and apply your ToC. Whatever the process, we strongly advise that you consult with key stakeholders both within and outside the organisation. This does not always have to involve multiple workshops (although at least one is recommended).

Consultation can also take place through questionnaires and Skype interviews and sharing thoughts for comment and amendment. Equally, your theory of change should show evidence that it has been informed by learning (internally through acting on the results of evaluations and impact assessments; and externally through citing results of relevant research).

The following extract, again from Concern Universal UK, summarises the process that one organisation used.

“Here are the key steps that we followed to develop the ToC:

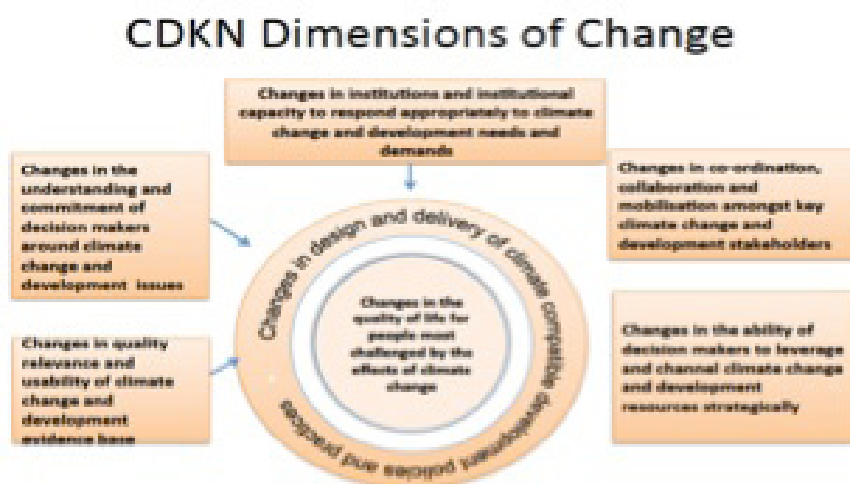
- 1. Introductory workshop:** We began with an introductory workshop on the theories behind ‘Theory of Change’ (with an external facilitator) at a global strategy meeting. This allowed us to develop initial thinking around theories of change. The meeting was just as much about getting buy in and understanding from senior staff as developing the theory itself.
- 2. ToC working group:** At the workshop we agreed who would get involved in a small working group to take forward the idea of developing an organisational Theory of Change. The group was made up by UK and country level staff, managers and advisors, and led by the UK Advocacy and Learning Manager.
- 3. Poverty paper:** Representatives from the UK and Malawi led the development of a thought piece on poverty and vulnerability. The paper explored the underlying causes of poverty and vulnerability; how does (social) change happen, how our work promotes change, and how we can incorporate change in to programme planning. Once the paper was drafted it was circulated to senior staff in the UK and in country programmes for comment. It went through many drafts before being finalised. This process took place over a period of four months
- 4. Developing the Theory of Change:** After the development of the background paper on poverty, which defined our contribution to change, we focused in on developing a theory of change –an illustration of how our work led to positive social change. The Theory of Change was based on our organisational strategic plan and other key internal documents, like our partnership and advocacy guides. The start and end points of the Theory of Change are the same as our strategy (i.e. we are trying to ameliorate the causes and consequences of poverty and ensure people are able to live with justice, dignity and respect). The key difference is what’s in the middle – the pathway to getting there.
- 5. Final design (and explanatory notes):** Once we had a diagram it took much longer than expected to decide on a final design. The design process brought up a number of issues, some of them quite fundamental, and we had to be careful that we didn’t go back to the drawing board. At the same time as putting the final design in place we also wrote up two pages of explanatory notes for the Theory of Change diagram. We had originally envisaged that the background paper on poverty would be enough of a guide to the paper but actually the explanatory notes have proved a much more useful guiding tool and form an integral part of the Theory of Change”.

James Treasure Evans, Impact and Learning Adviser, Concern Universal

2.5 Another option to consider: Domains of Change

Because larger organisations often operate in several countries and, therefore, very different contexts, they sometimes struggle to be able to describe in simple but realistic ways the sequences of changes that they hope to be able to achieve and influence. In order to address this issue, some organisations have opted to develop a core set of inter-related domains (or dimensions) of change that they believe are central to their vision and strategic goal being achieved. Effectively this means that in all of their projects and programmes they seek to influence one or more of these domains or dimensions of change (but that the way they do this will vary according to culture and context).

The following example comes from a global programme Climate Change and Development Knowledge Network (CDKN), which works in 13 priority countries in three continents across the globe. There are Theories of Change at organisational, outcome and country programme level, but these “Dimensions of Change” act as the backbone and the glue which connects ToCs at all levels: Using the domains of change in this way for planning ensures that Theories of Change for programmes and projects are all working to an agreed set of change areas. This sets the framework for consistent monitoring and reflection around change through the lifetime of the strategy. But, whether you use Domains of change or not, the Theory of Change approach at this level should ideally be robust enough to become the overall framework for monitoring and evaluating change at all levels throughout the organisation.



Each domain/dimension is accompanied (in the narrative) by a “menu of outcomes” which describes a variety of changes that are likely to occur under each of the Domains. The idea behind this is that **all projects and programmes** are expected to be able to influence changes under one or more of these domains, but that the nature of the changes will vary according to country and prevailing context. No one programme is expected to be able to influence all of these changes, but every project and programme needs to demonstrate how they will/can influence one or more of them.

Example menu of outcomes for Dimension 2: Changes in the design and delivery of policies and practices:

- > Institutions (especially government) setting in motion a new CCD policy
- > Improved CCD policy legislation
- > Formal introduction of a new CCD policy
- > Rejection of a proposed or existing CCD policy that may have negative consequences
- > Improved implementation or enforcement of existing CCD policies
- > Development or improvement of national CCD strategy
- > Removal of blockages to CCD policy change or CCD policy implementation
- > Governments sign up to international agreements on CCD
- > Increased involvement of women involved in policy decisions
- > Institutions (especially government) agreeing to new CCD proposals

2.6 Applying a ToC approach to monitoring and critical reflection of your organisational efforts

As the six-step cycle around an Organisational ToC (described in Chapter 2) is likely to span the length of the strategy itself, organisations need to think of useful (and user friendly) ways of gathering and analysing information during the strategic cycle.

If they have opted for the Domains of Change approach, then all planning and reporting forms at project and programme level should build in a component that reflects this.

“CDKN’s dimensions of change, to which all of its projects and programmes are expected to contribute, are inter-related. This means that any CDKN project or programme, regardless of output area or regional focus, may be working towards one or more of them at the same time. Success for CDKN is defined by the ability to make positive changes in these areas. By the same token, projects that do not explicitly contribute to one or more of these dimensions should not be implemented under the CDKN”

CDKN M&E Plan 2010

If Domains are not used, it is still possible, but more challenging to ensure that planning and reporting forms consider key areas of change that the organisation hopes to influence.

Ways of gathering, analysing and reflecting on change at organisational level

The main purpose of gathering and analysing information about changes that the organisation has (or has not) been able to influence is to be able to test how sound their Theory of Change is both over time and over different countries and contexts. Organisations need to be able to build up this body of evidence to demonstrate why they continue to work in particular ways or, indeed why they realise that they need to change the ways that they work, or the partner with whom they work.

- ***Analysing and reflection in Impact monitoring reports at programme and project levels:***

It stands to reason that the most useful, and most nuanced, information and analysis to inform these important decisions will be provided by aggregating and analysing information that has been collected at project and programme levels. This will include the results and reflections from regular impact monitoring, as well as the testing and reporting on assumptions. Methodology for monitoring impact at these levels is described in Chapter 3.

- ***Setting dedicated learning questions for the organisation to explore and report on:***

Responding to the need for more evidence robust of learning being fed back into organisation's planning, some organisations have set themselves a set of specific questions to explore and report on across their different areas of operation. For example, WaterAid recently conducted a whole organisation equity review of how successfully consideration of equity and inclusion have been incorporated into their programmes

"This equity and inclusion review was not intended to be a comprehensive rigorous evaluation of all our work, rather the aim was to identify key practices and gaps which could be used internally to help direct our future work on equity and inclusion. In order to achieve this, WaterAid staff were heavily involved in the consultation process, which included gathering both basic quantitative and qualitative data in which individual staff and country programmes had a chance to reflect on their own practices"

- ***Setting up tracking or tracer studies:***

These are designed to complement other forms of review and evaluation. These studies are designed to track or trace elements of change over time in greater depths than can be expected from impact monitoring. Typically, they focus on one or two key areas:

- **Tracking changes for stakeholders:** in these studies a sample from one or more specific target groups are tracked over time. The study is designed to interrogate at regular intervals what is changing (or has changed) for them; the significance of these changes and the extent to which the organisations have contributed to these identified changes. ILO –IPEC:

In October 2003, ILO/IPEC initiated the development of a tracer methodology to measure Longer Term Impacts of its Action Programmes on child beneficiaries and their families. The main objective was to determine the changes in the lives of the programme beneficiaries on the whole. It should be kept in mind that the tracer study was not intended to assess the ILO/IPEC's Action

Programmes, but it was geared to capture the changes of the programme beneficiaries that had been part of the programmes in terms of several impact areas. The impacts might not necessarily come from the programmes they had participated in, as there had been many external factors that played roles in the lives of the programme beneficiaries after the programme period. The developed methodology was tested in five alternative IPEC project contexts, one of which was Indonesia.

- **Process tracing studies:** They explore the value and effectiveness of different processes that the organisation employs to achieve or influence change. Oxfam is currently carrying out a series of such process tracing exercises

Oxfam GB has adopted a Global Performance Framework. Among other things, this framework involves the random selection of a sample of closing or sufficiently mature projects that are contributing to one of its six indicator areas and rigorously evaluating their performance. One of the key things to be examined is the extent the sampled projects have generated change in relation to Oxfam GB's global outcome indicators. The citizen voice and policy influencing outcome indicators, in particular, are informed by qualitative data and necessitate the undertaking of rigorous qualitative research. Process tracing is a qualitative research method that is particularly relevant for casual inference

Pleas see this link for more information:

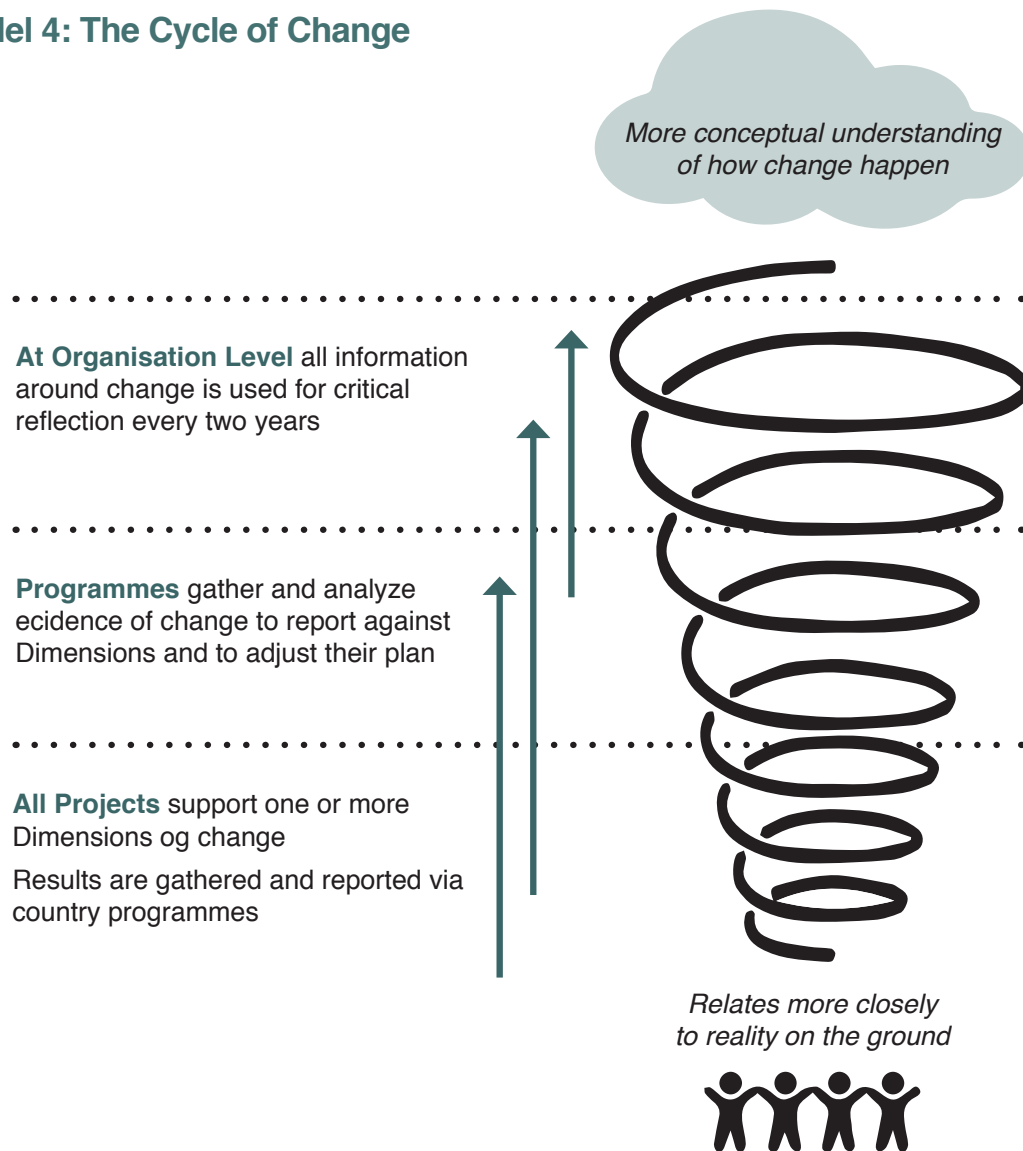
http://policypractice.oxfam.org.uk/~media/Files/policy_and_practice/methods_approaches/effectiveness/Process-tracing-draft-protocol-110113.ash

Ensuring that the mid term review reflects and acts on any and all of the mechanisms described above to ensure that lessons are explicitly built into the second half of the strategy. Key questions to ask at this (and indeed any reflection stage) include:

- ***In the light of the changing context, what do we understand about how change happened and what role we played in the process?***
- ***Are we working with the right people in the right way?***
- ***To what extent (if any) is planned changes actually taking place?***
- ***Are these evidenced changes are making a difference to stakeholders lives?***
- ***What exactly did our efforts contribute (could be positive, negative unintended.)?***
- ***So what have we learned and how should we adapt our plans in the light of this?***

The following diagram illustrates the ways that information is used and shared at different levels to reflect and report on change in CDKN

Model 4: The Cycle of Change



2.7 The Resource Allocation Model (RAM) for Framework Organisations and its relationship with a ToC approach

The Danida RAM standards (introduced in 2014) have been designed to encourage framework organisations to plan and report against new criteria which will be assessed against a set of performance standards. Results of these assessments will inform funding decisions to be made by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Key features of this performance model include a move from annual to multi annual funding (which requires that both planning and reporting fit this new time frame); a specific focus on the provision of evidence to support claims of changes for end beneficiaries; clarity about the logic of their interventions including “a theory of change or similar”; and an analysis of the unique role of Danish CSOs (their added value) in the processes of change.

RAM Standards are designed to foster the following gains:

- Create transparency around allocation of financial appropriations to frame organisations;
- Reward high performance;
- Improve documentation of results;
- Enhance predictability and long-term planning.

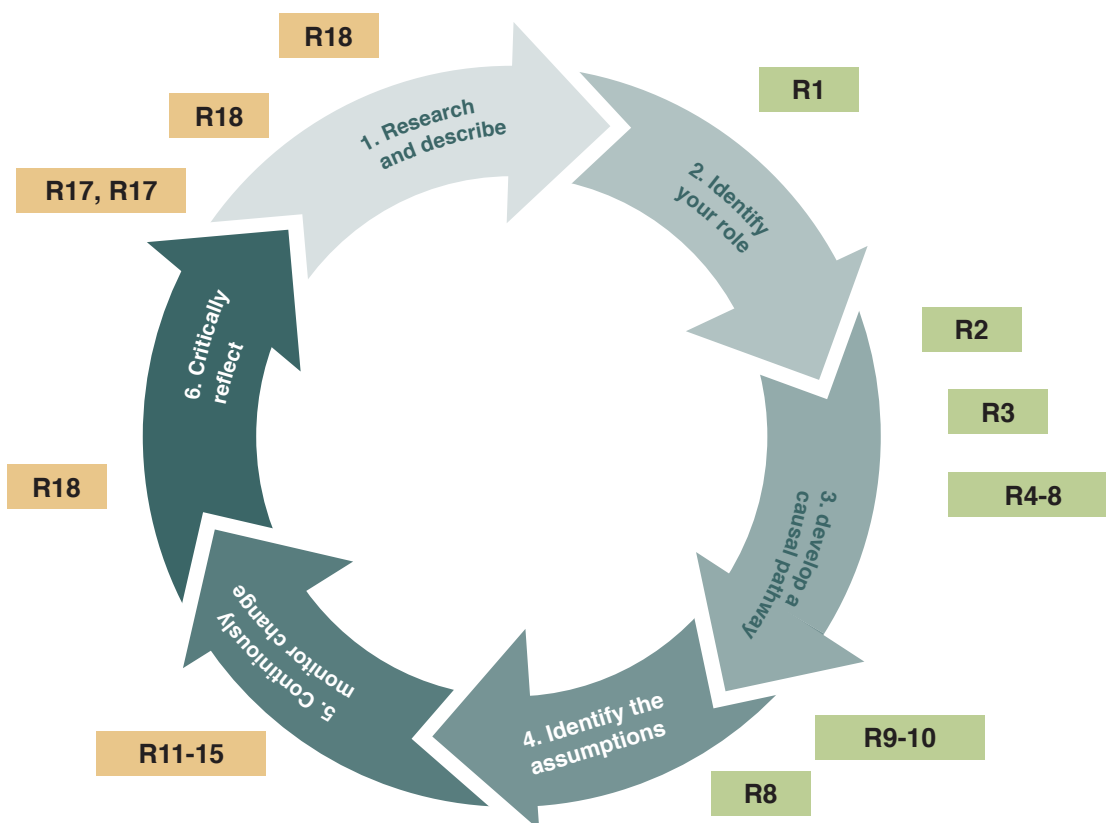
The RAM seeks to incentivize:

- Wise planning, management and monitoring for development results;
- Reliable reporting on achievements and weaknesses accompanied by highly professional risk management;
- Continuous learning from the past and innovative adjustment to the future.

A Theory of Change approach to planning and evaluation will clearly support framework organisations in complying with RAM standards. In particular a strong focus on applying theory of change thinking at country programme level; and then aggregating the results to a global level will enable organisations to work more effectively with the complexity of different country contexts, and at the same time be able to provide an overall assessment of their contributions to change.

The following diagram demonstrates how questions in RAM which relate to performance in both planning and reporting (Section 3) connect directly with the six steps in the ToC cycle

Model: How RAM standards fit



CHAPTER 3

HOW TO APPLY A TOC APPROACH AT THE PROJECT AND PROGRAMME LEVEL

A ToC approach in programme and project planning helps us...

- Clarify our own assumptions about change so that we can assess them as we move on to implement our programme and so that we can revise them according to our lessons learnt.
- Focus on the changes (results) we want to make rather than the activities we do.
- Build joint understanding among multiple stakeholders about how we can contribute to change, how our work can be mutually re-enforcing and why we plan as we do.

Applying a theory of change approach at project and programme level has several advantages:

Clarify the project's or programme's contribution to social change processes:

It helps practitioners clarify and articulate how their project or programme can contribute to social and relational change in a particular context, sector or thematic area.

Stronger project or programme design:

It helps us make a stronger programme design by supporting a focus on changes (results) rather than activities, and by clarifying our own internal assumptions and key external factors that may affect programme implementation.

Improved ability for 'real-time' adjustments of our project or programme:

Articulate assumptions about how change happens, and the key external factors that may influence implementation before we start implementing our project or programme allows us to better assess and adjust our strategy to what we learn about the change we make (or don't make) as we 'move on'.

Stronger project or programme cohesion:

A ToC approach helps us elicit how the combined efforts of a range of funded projects and activities under the programme framework will contribute to achieve desired changes (results) within the programme area.

Teambuilding and cooperation:

Finally, applying a ToC approach for programming helps us develop a common understanding among diverse stakeholders and partners, regarding what will be accomplished and how, as well

as the role and contribution of each partner to joint goals. As such, a Theory of Change approach at programme level can contribute to teambuilding, joint commitment and ownership among multiple stakeholders, provided that it is applied in a participatory manner.

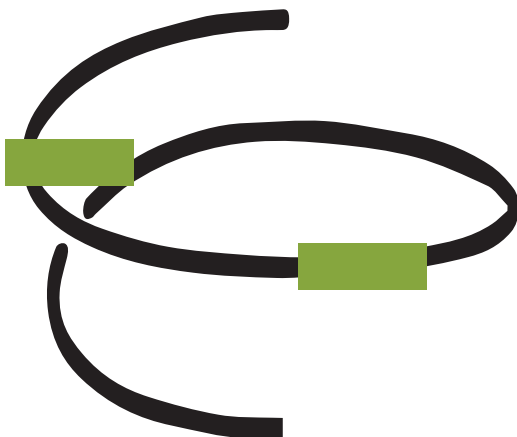
Even though a theory of change approach is useful in all stages of the project or programme cycle, it is not a solve-all panacea for programme designs, monitoring and evaluation. It must be used in conjunction with other tools and approaches. The following tools can be used to inform and compliment a theory of change approach. Note that the list is not exhaustive:

- Logic and/or Results frameworks (LFAs) (see chapter 2 and annexes).
- Context (and sometimes conflict) analysis
- Baseline studies
- Monitoring strategies
- Evaluation approaches and methodologies.

The following sections provides a brief overview and examples of how the 6 steps of the theory of change approach which is introduced in chapter 2 may be applied for project or programme planning, monitoring and evaluation.

3.1 Applying a ToC approach for project and programme planning, monitoring and evaluation – involving multiple stakeholders.

3.1.1 Step 1 and 2: Understanding how change happens in our context and our own role in it



Project and programme planning never takes place in a vacuum. We base our planning on our implicit understanding of change dynamics and the role we can play in it. More often than not our planning is based on or follows previous interventions and methodologies that we have applied before.

Yet, change processes differ over time and from one context to another and are never the same. In order to understand how change happens we need to be very clear about how the change process unfolds and the preconditions that must be in place for the vision to be achieved.

This element of thinking about how change happens is “big picture thinking” that allows us to clarify our own contribution to the change we want to see as well as changes that we are unable to contribute to but which needs the contributions of others.

We might be more explicit on what could be activities in step 1 (Research/how change happens) and the following step 2 (Identifying your CSOs role). Reference to OM still fine.

Would it be possible to make reference to which processes step 1 and 2 equals in a LFA process (eg. 'Problem- and context-analysis')

Outcome mapping as part of the planning cycle

Gathering experiences and lessons learnt about how our previous work has contributed to change and how other changes external to our own work contributes to our end goal, and articulating this in 'change flows' provides valuable information that can be a very valuable source for future programming.

Outcome Mapping is a methodology for planning and assessing development programming at project and programme level that is oriented towards change and social transformation. Outcome mapping takes the point of departure that "change is essentially about people relating to each other and their environment. It therefore focuses on changes in behaviour, relationships, actions and activities in the people, groups, and organizations it works with directly (i.e., outcomes). Outcome Mapping suggests that in order to bring about impact (systemic change), there must be changes in the behaviour, relationships, actions and activities in the people, groups, and organizations that the intervention works with directly.

Mapping outcomes can be a very useful contribution to understand how change happens in our context and our own role in it. It can help us learn about our programme's influence on the progression of change and encourage us to think more systematically and pragmatically about what our project or programme does and how it contributes to bring about intended and unintended outcomes. This can help us clarify our own contribution and role in the change process and to design pathways for change based on the knowledge and experience we have already about our work.

Outcome Mapping puts people and learning at the centre of development and accepts unanticipated changes as potential for innovation.

[INSERT LINK/REFERENCE on Outcome Mapping](#)

Case 1: Outcome Mapping in a Programme for Social Change

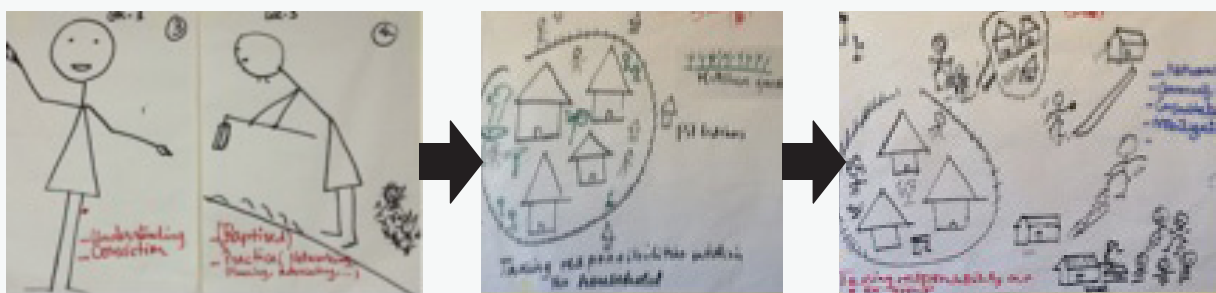
A group of NGOs decided to map the outcome of their previous work as an input to the design of a new programme. The purpose of the programme was to enable rural communities in Africa to hold local authorities accountable to the communities' civic and social rights.

Originally, the implementing NGOs had thought of their new programme as an advocacy capacity programme aimed to train community groups in advocacy planning, negotiation skills and working together as a group.

However, an outcome mapping exercise including focus group discussions with previous programme beneficiaries – mainly citizens from very poor and marginalised communities, female and single headed households – and workshops with field workers, revealed that to mobilize and enable rural communities to hold local authorities accountable, several other factors but advocacy training had to be considered, including

- Community members' self-esteem and belief that their voices counted and that they could make a difference in their own life and the life of others.
- Community members' own physical wellbeing and the wellbeing of their children.
- Community members' ability to manage conflicts in their groups in a constructive and peaceful way.

The outcome mapping exercise clarified, that 'the journey for change' for poor and marginalised community groups members involved changes in the community members' perception of themselves as empowered and capable to manage their own personal and household affairs, protect their health and care for the needs of their children. It included changes in the way community members took responsibility for changes in their own immediate household. Finally, it included changes in their understanding and skills of how they could engage meaningfully local authorities – which was the original focus of the programme idea.



These insights into the various emotional, cognitive, group dynamics and skill based factors that influence the motivation of individuals and groups to engage in encounters with local authorities and defend their rights helped clarify the programme's future role and contribution to social changes in rural communities.

3.1.2 Step 3 and 4: Articulating change pathways and assumptions about change

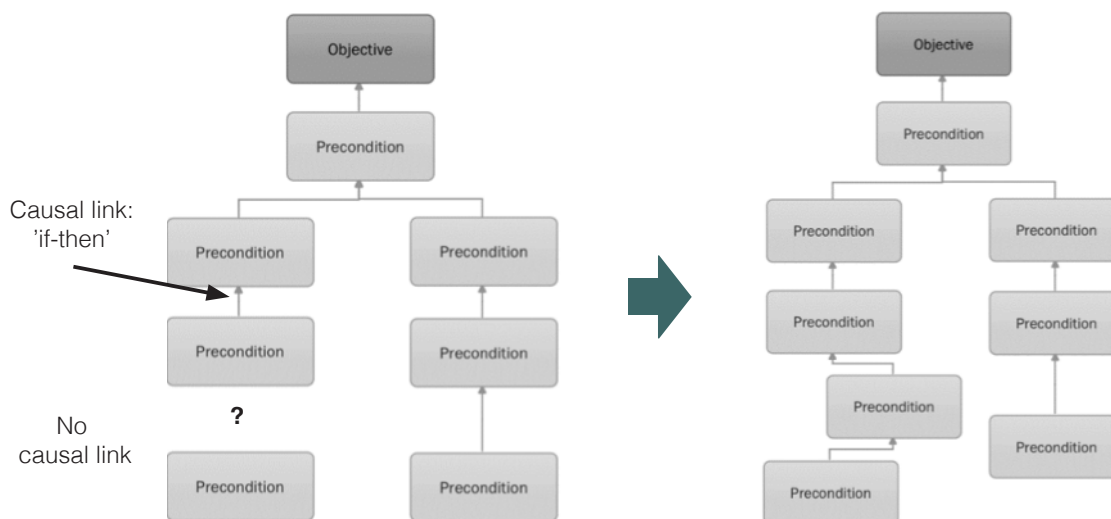


A theory of change approach is a learning process as much as a product. Its real added value lies in its ability to facilitate reflection and awareness among project and programme planners on their own implicit thinking about how change happens and their own role in it. Such implicit 'mental models of change' affects the way we plan our programmes and projects. We need to be aware of them if we want to learn from our experiences and adjust our thinking and project and programme planning to our lessons learnt.

When we develop **change pathways**, we explain how we think one change – often at output level – will contribute to other changes – either outputs or outcomes. We develop change pathways by identifying all changes/preconditions that should be in place for the project or programme to reach its goal and to put them in an order that makes sense to us. The result is a graphical illustration of how we think change takes place.

Developing pathways is an opportunity for us to challenge ourselves in our planning by articulating and assessing the logical causal links between the interventions that we plan and the changes (outputs and outcomes) that we anticipate. Very often, this leads us to revise our planning as we realise that important changes are missing in our change pathways or as we identify assumptions that are critical either to the project or programme implementation or to the context.

We check the causal links by linking the changes we have identified as key to reach our goal with a causal 'if-then' formulation. If the causal 'if-then' cannot be established, then changes may be missing and should be added to the pathway.



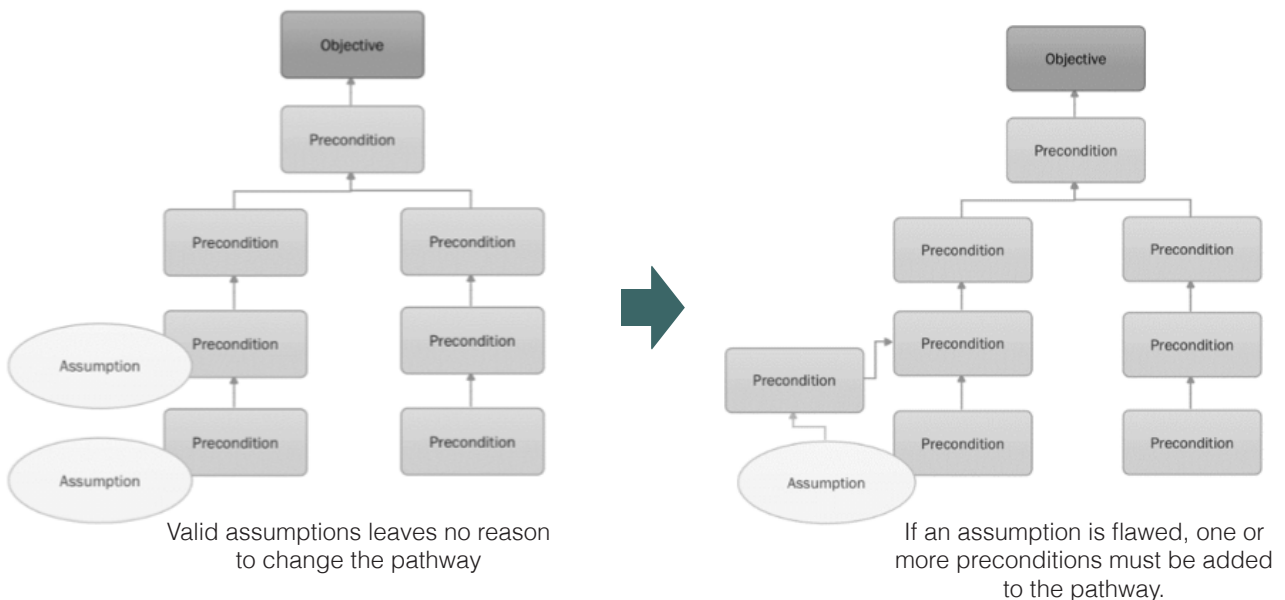
An assumption is something that is accepted as true or likely to happen but there is no proof (yet). Assumptions underpin our understanding of how change works, and why the chosen programmatic priorities or project framework functions better than others

- The project or programme **implementation** itself: e.g. are interventions relevant to the situation, do we have the capacity to do this?
- The project or programme **beneficiaries**: The interest, needs and response of beneficiaries and targets to our work
- The project or programme **context**: The policy context, the influence of external actors to the change process

Articulating critical assumptions for each of a project's or programme's identified preconditions allows planners to assess if they have taken all imaginable considerations into account or if anything has been 'missed out' to develop a feasible strategy to reach the project's or programme's goal.

A critical assumption to enhance capacity of local NGOs to engage in advocacy campaigns for women's rights may for instance be that local NGOs have staff to engage in advocacy or that the organizations' board and management support that the organization engages more openly in advocacy and campaigning.

The intervention will get 'stuck' if any of these assumptions are flawed and nothing is done to create the situation where human resources are available in the organizations or the board can be mobilized in support of advocacy. In other words: Critical assumptions that are flawed must be addressed and turned into preconditions that the programme or project must seek to address.



If flawed assumptions are outside the influence of the programme or project – for instance because they are contextual - then planners must assess the realism of their stated outcomes or goals and revise their pathways and articulated contribution to change accordingly.

Case 2:

Providing a 'reality check' to advocacy programming through the articulation of pathways and assumptions.

An international NGO decided to develop change pathways and articulate critical assumptions as part of a 'quality check' of their national advocacy programme in Egypt. The programme's goal was to contribute to a situation where national legislation and policy making reflected women's equal rights, needs and concerns.

The NGO would contribute to this by strengthening the capacity of local CSOs to represent the interests and rights of women in national, regional and international policy fora.

Developing change pathways and explaining how and why the programme interventions would strengthen capacity of local CSOs helped programme staff to a number of important recognitions not reflected in the initial programme idea:

When developing change pathways programme staff realized that enabling local CSOs to represent rights and needs of their constituencies was probably a much more time consuming and challenging process than originally articulated.

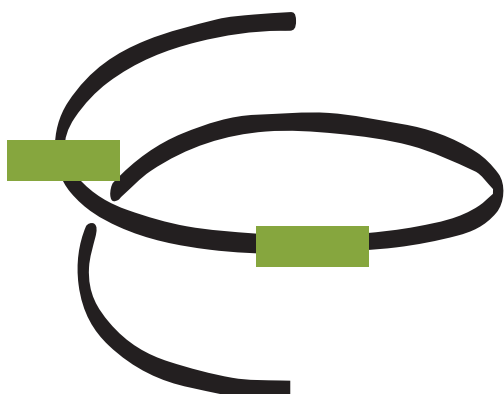
Through discussion of the change pathways that would lead to 'CSO capacity', programme staff realized the complexity of building such 'capacity'. Discussions revealed, that the CSOs' willingness and ability to truly involve constituencies in priority setting, the CSO managements' willingness to promote transparency in management of funds and decision-making and commitment to promote staff welfare policies and reduce high rates of staff turnover was as important preconditions for change as more mainstream advocacy capacities for campaigning and lobbying.

Articulating the complexity of strengthening CSOs capacity to truly represent interests of women led the programme staff to revise their programme outcomes and communication to their donors about what they could realistically achieve in a 3-year programme period.

A complicating factor turned out to be the programme's critical assumption that national CSO management teams and board members would be interested in working with the international NGO on the organizational development issues identified. Programme staff described the working relationship with the CSOs as a relationship of reciprocity, trust and commitment. Yet, the fact that the programme intervention was challenging power relations within CSOs (e.g. by working towards greater transparency and staff involvement in decision making), and the fact that other international donors provided much larger pools of funds to their work could potentially challenge the motivation of CSO management teams to engage in organizational capacity building.

At the time of planning, programme staff was unable to determine whether the assumption about CSO management teams' willingness to participate in the programme was true or flawed. Thus, it was decided that the assumption should be critically assessed during the programme's regular monitoring procedures. Programme interventions would be revised later on, if the assumption turned out to be flawed.

3.1.3 Step 5 and 6: Monitoring change processes and the feasibility of our assumptions – and adjusting projects and programmes accordingly



Applying a ToC approach during monitoring and implementation helps us understand how and why our work contributes to bring about change. On this basis we can assess the feasibility, relevance and effectiveness of our work against contextual changes and critical assumptions, and against our 'real time' experiences of how change 'unfolds'. Based on this, we can make necessary revisions to our project or programme strategy and implementation.

A theory of change that adequately describes the actions, the desired change, the outcomes/ preconditions that will lead us to this change, and the strategy's underlying assumptions is essential for a theory based approach to monitoring and evaluating programmes and projects.

Knowing this critical information will enable us to monitor and assess the outcomes that we make, compare them against our original thinking about how change is made, assess if they are still the most relevant and likely to help us achieve our goal, and revised our programme strategy according to our findings.

This equals step 5-6 in the ToC planning and reflection cycle presented in chapter 2.

3.2 When and how do we assess the preliminary impact and progress of our programmes?

It doesn't have to be time-consuming or costly to apply a ToC-approach during programme implementation to assess the progress and viability of our thinking about change. The challenge is to identify relevant occasions for programme implementers and stakeholders to meet and critically reflect on how their think they are contributing to change in light of contextual changes and programme lessons learnt.

Relevant occasions may include, but not be limited to:

- **Kick-off meetings with key stakeholders at the onset of programme or project implementation:** A kick-off meeting provides an opportunity to ensure that project staff, partners and other key stakeholders all share a common understanding of how change is expected to occur, and their role in that change. Implementing project or programme staff can also review the project theories of change when creating work-plans and reviewing baselines results. Critical issues to address during kick-off meetings may be the continued validity of assumptions and major changes in the context, since the programme strategy was made.

- **Semi-annual partner programme meetings and mid-term reviews:** Semi-annual and annual meetings between programme partners and stakeholders provides an opportunity to critically reflect upon the programme strategy and to create joint learning and understanding. Both about how change happens and necessary revisions of the programme strategy and will strengthen the likelihood that we will achieve our goal.

Critical questions to ask during such occasions include but are not limited to the following:

- *How and to what extent did we create the preconditions that we think – or thought – are necessary to bring about the desired change (impact).*
- *What – if any – were the un-expected outcomes of our work so far, and how are these outcomes likely to contribute to the desired change?*
- *Did we consider the right factors and dynamics in the initial design or assessment of our programme – or have other preconditions/outcomes for change turned out to be crucial to realize if we want to achieve our goal?*
- *Has anything unexpected occurred in the environment that was not foreseen and which might necessitate a more nuanced approach?*
- *What does this tell us about our assumptions? Are they all still valid or are they flawed?*
- *Based on this, are there gaps in our strategy to bring about change – do we need to revise our pathways and if so, how?*

Case 3: Impact assessment and real-time adjustment of an Aids-programme ‘as we move ahead’

A group of NGOs formed a programme aimed to combat discrimination and promote quality HIV/AIDS health services for HIV positive patients and people going for voluntary testing.

Their programme was based on the understanding that

- **if** patients and citizens going for testing knew about their rights and claimed these rights in accordance with the protocols that health practitioners had to apply and
- **if** health practitioners themselves were properly informed and had the capacity to apply these protocols,
- **then** patients would receive services in a patient friendly environment without discrimination and humiliation.

Consequently, the programme set out to train health practitioners and patients/citizens alike.

One year into the programme the NGOs assessed the preliminary impact (progress) of their work and realized that their thinking about change was incomplete: Even though patients were informed by the programme and did file complaints when they experienced cases of mal-treatment, and even though health practitioners knew how to apply patient-friendly health protocols, discrimination and humiliation was still widespread.

This caused the NGOs to revise their programme strategy and to focus not only on the capacity of health staff, but on their motivation and incentives to apply their knowledge and capacity to provide patient-friendly services. Amongst others, the NGOs intensified their cooperation with managers of the targeted health clinics and worked to address the fears and prejudices of health practitioners towards people going for testing or living with HIV/AIDS. The latter had turned out to be a much more serious issues than first anticipated, as blaming of people living with HIV/AIDS was getting more common in public discourse and media and seems to affect attitudes of health professionals too.

3.3 Applying a Theory of Change Approach at end of project or programme evaluations

Applying a theory of change approach towards programme completion and for end- of programme evaluations can help us assess the continued appropriateness and likely future relevance and effectiveness of our programme to contribute to change.

Theory-based Evaluations help assess whether our underlying thinking and assumptions about how change happened were correct by identifying the causal linkages between our activities and the changes that they 'triggered' or contributed to. Theory based evaluations explores the mechanisms (processes and changes) which we think made our programme effective and compares these with collected information and evidence.

Theory-based evaluations start by finding and articulating a programme's implicit 'theory' or thinking about how change happens. This may require additional steps, if a programme's theory of change was not articulated before or at the onset of the project or programme, or if it needs revision. (This equals step 1-4 in the ToC reflection cycle). Thus, it is possible to conduct a theory-based evaluation of a programme, even though the approach was not applied during project or programme planning or during implementation.

The second step in a theory based evaluation is to test this 'theory' to investigate whether, why or how the programme caused intended or observed changes the way we thought they would by exploring the validity of the theory's key assumptions and contextual changes that may have influenced the theory (This equals step 5 and 6 in the reflection cycle).

There are often multiple 'theories of change' or 'change pathways' in large-scale country or thematic programmes involving several components. This may make it infeasible to review each and every theory or aspect of a programme. The purpose of the evaluation will guide the selection

of which pathways will be tested. Of importance is to select the key or most pertinent pathways for monitoring, evaluation and/or assessment. For example, an evaluation of a single NGOs' engagement in a particular sector in a single country programme might focus on the relevance the anticipated pathways for change for that particular sector or component.

Developing and explicitly articulating multiple levels of theories of change allows for a greater efficiency in evaluation and identifying problems and successes. For instance, the overall theory of change for a sector or country programme may be perceived to be sound, but the pathways for change for the project could have issues. Thus, an evaluation will determine that instead of faulting the overall theory of change at the sector or country programme level, corrections can be made at the project level. Correspondingly, a successful project level theory of change can be pointed out and evaluated for positive lessons learned, even if the overall theory of change failed to accomplish its goal.

3.4 The goal was achieved, but how did we contribute to it?

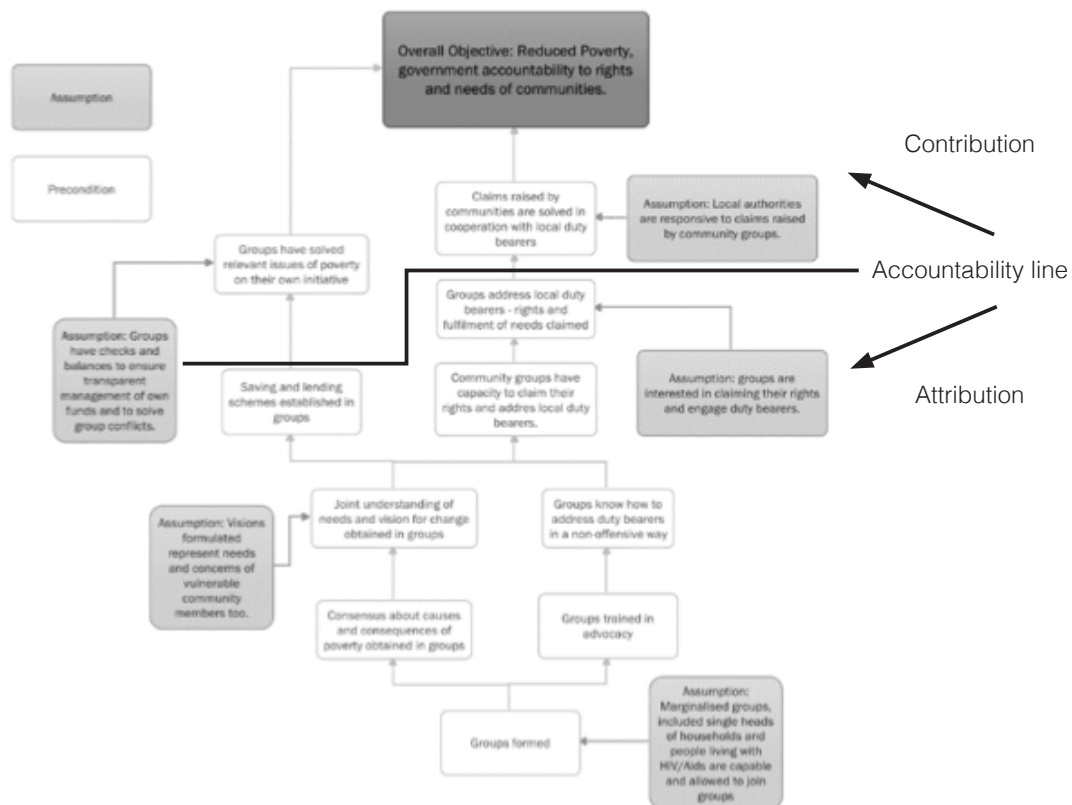
Theory based evaluations identify whether or not we have reached our desired goal and if change took place the way we thought it would. However, because of the complexity of social change, particularly at the level of larger programmes, it is rarely possible to attribute change to one specific actor alone. Seeking to do so will usually lead to an inaccurate conclusion.

Instead, programme stakeholders may look for meaningful evidence of a contribution to the desired programme change. Monitoring and evaluating change at programme and systemic level should therefore distinguish between contribution and attribution.

Attribution involves drawing causal links and explanatory conclusions between observed changes and specific interventions. In most programmes' – and projects in particular – there may be certain programme milestones or results in our change pathways that can be attributed to our work directly and to which the programme can be held accountable.

Other programme results may be the outcome of joint actions and contributions of several actors. Determining to what extent a successful outcome was achieved as a result of our efforts rather than other actors or factors could be difficult and expensive. However, demonstrating the contribution of a programme to key outcomes is crucial if the broader value of the programme is to be demonstrated and to enable decisions to be made about its future direction.

Introducing an accountability line in our change pathways may help us distinguish between the programme's contribution and its attribution to a programme result. This is useful, both to harmonize donors' and programme planners' and implementers' expectations as to what a programme can reasonably achieve and to design feasible frameworks for measuring results.



Main steps in a contribution analysis

- Clarify the theory of change. What was the change your assumed would happen as a consequence of your work?
- Gather existing evidence on the viability and relevance of the Theory of Change. Did change happen the way you expected?
- Identify and acknowledge the attribution problem. Can change be attributed to our work alone or did other external factors contribute too?
- Gather existing evidence of your contribution and the contribution of other factors and actors.

Case 4:

Measuring a Programme's Attribution and Contribution to the outcome of International Climate Negotiations.

To persuade the EU commission to scale up climate finance to poor and developing countries, a coalition of Danish and international NGOs engaged in an advocacy programme aimed to engage in non-confrontational relationships of cooperation with decision makers. The second aim was to build capacity of civil society actors in developing countries to engage effectively in advocacy alliances working to influence international climate negotiations and to build.

The programme's rationale was that

- **If** national coalitions of NGOs from developing countries participate actively and effectively and jointly in international advocacy alliances and climate talks and negotiations and
- **If** lobby interventions towards decision makers are conducted in a non-confrontational way

Then the EU commission could be influenced to scale-up climate finance in support of poor and developing countries' efforts to adapt and mitigate consequences of climate change. (The programme rationale had several other nuances, yet only those aspects of relevance to the example are included here)

The evaluation found that the project rationale (assumptions about how change would happen) was indeed relevant and that important progress towards the overall objective had been made in terms of policy commitment and dialogue with international decision makers.

However, in an advocacy context comprising of hundreds – if not thousands- of international players, how was it possible to demonstrate the programme's contribution to results made and therefore the programme's broader value?

To answer that question, the evaluation distinguished between results that were directly attributable to the programme and results to which the programme had contributed.

No-one else had worked to build capacity of national NGO coalitions in developing countries. This fact and findings from interviews and focus group discussions led to the evaluation to conclude that coalitions' ability to influence their own, national decision makers, present their own concerns in international climate talks and act as one joint group was attributable to the programme directly.

The evaluation also found that the strengthened NGO coalitions and more effective participation of 'southern voices' had improved the ability of the implementing NGOs to contribute to policy processes inside the EU commissions. Officials confirmed this and decision makers interviewed who found, that the inputs and suggestions of the NGOs very useful in their own work and the fact that these inputs were rooted in an international coalition with a strong participation of southern voices made them more credible and reliable. Inputs and suggestions from the programme stakeholders were therefore used by decision makers in policy briefs and reflected in key decision around the issue of climate finance.

Thus, although the evaluation was unable to conclude how much the programme had contributed to policy changes, it was possible to conclude – both from interviews and proof of written materials that important contributions had been made.

CHAPTER 4.

HOW TO INTRODUCE AND FACILITATE A TOC APPROACH IN OUR OWN ORGANIZATION OR WITH PARTNERS?

“Developing a Theory of Change is not a quick fix; rather it is a long-term change process that requires substantial investment in terms of staff time, commitment and resources.”

(Maureen O'Flynn, May 2012: Ontrac no. 51)

Introduction:

You have got some idea about what Theory of Change involves and how it works. You may even have been on a training course and are very enthusiastic about introducing the ideas in your own organisation at some level. So what are the next steps? The following list of questions came from one such staff member who had recently participated a five-day training on Theory of Change and Impact Assessment. Her questions summarise many that will need to be considered when taking this next steps:

- How to approach a country strategy development based on ToC where we have a range of partners involved: several Danish NGO's as well as several Southern NGO's, in both countries (Denmark and the specific Southern country)?
- How is the best way of introducing the concept and idea to southern partners (could apply to some of the persons in the Danish NGO's as well) with a view to trying to avoid the “oh no, not another fancy (read: probably less useful) concept to learn to satisfy the partner (read: donor)” – reaction?
- How much knowledge about ToC do the various organisations need?
- How can it be done – at least first time around, how much time would be needed where for whom? With a pragmatic view on it as well, how much time would it require approximately as a minimum and still make sense?
- A lot of negotiations may be implied in the process, as there are so many organisations involved with their own organizational visions, missions and strategies. How could the power play be handled within the process?
- Taking into consideration the balance between Northern and Southern partners, and ownership issues, how many persons / who would be suitable to doing the actual drafting of a change pathway and theory of change write-up?

This chapter provides some guidance on how to get started and how to facilitate some elements of the process. It also provides links to some workshop methodologies

4.1 How to get started:

4.1.1 Why do you want a Theory of Change and what do you want to achieve?

Before even thinking of introducing a Theory of Change (approach), it is worth working together with a small core group of staff members to really clarify why you want to introduce it and what you want to achieve from it. By doing this thoroughly, you be able to take important decisions about the design of the process and who you would want to involve in it. We advise two reflection tasks here:

a. Clarify how and why your organisation will work to apply a ToC approach: The following list of questions may help you think this through:

- How can the theory of change strengthen monitoring, learning and evaluation
- How can ToC inform strategic planning?
- How can ToC inform organisation development plans (by building on identified priorities and by analysing what really brings organisational change)
- How can ToC inform evaluations (by providing a framework for questions and activities)?
- How can you use ToC for funding applications, fundraising?
- How can you use ToC for advocacy and communication?

b. Clarify what you have you already got in place in terms of Theory of Change and what are your priority areas for strengthening?

As stated in in Chapter 1, all organisations /programmes /projects are designed with an implicit Theories of Change in mind. As part of the process to decide how and what to introduce, it is worth spending time on analysing what is already in place. This s not only helpful in terms of planning the process: it is also very encouraging for those involved to see that they are strengthening and shaping material that they already have, rather than starting from scratch.

The following table illustrates an extract from a mini audit conducted with one organisation where there were plans to develop a Theory of Change at organisational level

Steps in the development of Theory of Change	What your org/programme already has in place	What are your priorities areas for development in each step?
STEP 1: Research and describe how you think change happens	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implicit information in strategy papers • A clear vision of change for children in war zones • Some more specific in specific strategies (e.g. advocacy strategy) • Focus is connected to organisational efforts - doesn't look beyond to other actors and factors that could influence positively or negatively 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An articulated change hypothesis, which speaks to the vision and draws on existing learning both internally and externally
STEP 2: Identify your specific role in contributing to these changes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lots of elements: approaches, ways of working, principles, working relationships, strategies and thematic areas • Some analysis of organisational areas of direct and indirect influence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An analysis which is explicitly aligned with the analysis of change above • Specific roles in the change process and how that supports to and links with other efforts

4.1.2 Who do you want to invite on board the process?

As described in previous chapters, ToC is both a product and a process. As a product it serves as our 'mental roadmap' on how we think we can contribute to change in a world of complexity. As a process it serves as a framework for reflection about how we think change takes place in our context and as a framework for learning more about the change process as we move ahead and implement our interventions.

To maximize the potential benefits of a ToC approach for learning and reflection it is important that you invite the right people on board the process. That is: those who are to execute their work based on your thinking about how change happens and who are therefore to communicate your ToC, make decisions based on it or provide important feedback and reflection about the validity of your ToC during the course of implementation. The latter equals step 4-6 in the ToC reflection circle.

When you develop ToCs at organizational level relevant participants may for instance include heads of organization (to insure buy-in and support for the process), strategic planners, advisors and fundraisers.

When you develop ToCs at programme and project level, relevant stakeholders may include partners – who receive funding based on the ToC – and country programme staff. Sometimes it is relevant to consider inviting local donors to the process too. This may strengthen their interest and ownership to the programme being developed. In other situations you may consider inviting representatives of advocacy targets with whom your programme has developed a friendly and constructive working relationship already. Such informants may provide important inputs into the programme's thinking about how policy changes happen in the local or national context.

4.1.3 How to introduce ToC to your organisation:

The table below provides ideas on how a ToC approach can be introduced in your own organization and to partners abroad: From introducing colleagues to the approach for the first time to building incentives for its application during the programme cycle.

What you need to do	How can you do it?
1. CREATE COMMITMENT Your target audience needs to experience themselves that the tool is helpful to them in terms of planning, M&E and learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Facilitate a ToC introduction workshop where participants experience how the approach contributes to clarify 'how' and 'why' they think they can achieve desired goals. 'Doing' is more powerful than 'telling'. Encourage your target audience to apply the ToC approach. Start with a single project or a 'corner' of your organization's work. Evaluate experiences and added value, and discuss the possible applicability of the approach on other parts of the organisation's work
2. FACILITATE SKILLS Your target audience should be confident using the approach	<p>Encourage your organization or partners to identify 2-3 staff members who can become 'ToC experts' and support and encourage other staff members to use the tool. Train identified 'ToC experts' and provide coaching and support as they work to introduce and mainstream the tool in their organization.</p>
3. ALLOCATE TIME AND BUDGETS A ToC approach is only useful if used. This means that you need to allocate time and budgets so that you can monitor your pathways and thinking about how change happens and why. And so that you can revise your LFAs and indicators according to your lessons learnt.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assist in setting-up simple-to-use procedures for monitoring, evaluation and learning on a regular basis. This could for instance be done by facilitating ½ day ToC monitoring and learning workshops every 6 months, involving all relevant programme or project stakeholders, or by revising monitoring formats so that they facilitate reflection on how and why changes have taken place within the framework of the project or programme. Include budgets that will facilitate this reflection process. The budgets you allocate for M&E already may be sufficient to serve this purpose.

4.1.4 How will you design and plan the process?

There is no exact 'blueprint' on how much time and resources you will need to develop a ToC. That depends on a number of issues including:

- How and why you would want to adopt the approach in your organization.
- The number of stakeholders, partners and staff members you would want to involve.
- The degree of ownership, team building and buy-in you would want to create among participants during the process.
- How much you would want to verify assumptions and causal pathways in your ToC through research and collection of lessons learnt from other, similar interventions before you start implementing your intervention.
- Concern for the good enough approach: How much time you can realistically allocate without exhausting and discouraging participants even before implementation begins.

Regardless your answer to these questions, we recommend you to consider the following three elements:

a. Steps 1 and 2: Understand how change happens in your context and your role in it

Depending on what you have in place already, it may be useful to start the process by developing a paper, a country, project or programme analysis that can inform your development of causal pathways later on. The paper should define how you understand the problem or issue that your intervention aims to contribute to solve, how various stakeholders and actors contribute to the issues – either positively or negatively – and how the issue affects the beneficiaries that you aim to target with your intervention.

The paper should help you get an overview of the key dimensions of change – e.g. within policies, policy implementation, grassroots response and social norms that are necessary to create the long-term changes that your intervention aims to contribute to and should help you make an informed choice about what dimension or dimensions of change your intervention will contribute to. As we are rarely capable of addressing all changes needed to facilitate long-term and developmental changes, the latter enables us to clarify our distinct contribution and set more realistic goals for what our intervention can contribute to.

To ensure buy-in and ownership to the document, a joint problem (three) analysis involving relevant partners and staff members may be included as part of the process developing the paper. Issues identified during the problem three analysis may for instance serve as guidance for or input to researchers when they research and draft the paper.

b. Steps 3 and 4: Developing change pathways and articulate assumptions

As described above, involving those partners and staff members who are actually going to work with the pathway in the process of developing it ensures both understanding of the process, and commitment to implement the ToC later on.

The exact time needed for developing change pathways depends on a number of factors including the number of participants, their previous experience with the approach, the complexity of the intervention and the degree of ownership you would want to create. Three days may be

sufficient in some situations. Less – or more – may be relevant in other contexts. Equally, you may choose to do some elements of consultation remotely and build this into either the workshop itself or the post workshop development of the product.

The table below provides inspiration on what a workshop agenda aimed to develop pathways and articulate assumptions may include. More or less time can be devoted for each item on the agenda if necessary. Please note that in this example it is assumed that a poverty paper has been developed already:

DAY 1	DAY 2	DAY 3
Welcome and introductions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Objectives and expectations Workshop plan 	Developing change pathways <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Backward mapping of outcomes Defining who to work with and how to work with them 	Developing change pathways <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identifying assumptions to test
ToC what is it? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participants experiences and a few exercises 		Outcome mapping and impact assessment <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The relationship between our ToC and monitoring, evaluation and learning How can we organize ourselves for make out ToC a 'living document that we will learn from?
Understanding change in our context <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Presentation and discussion of poverty paper (step 1 above) Discussion: What is our contribution to change – what can we realistically contribute to? 		

Useful training resources to consult:

- Free open-access Theory of Change software can be downloaded from: www.theoryofchange.org/toco-software/.

(Source: The Center for Theory of Change)

- An interactive Theory of Change template can be downloaded from: www.seachangecop.org/node/2758.

(Source: Keystone)

- Excellent Theory of Change training manuals can be downloaded from: www.seachangecop.org/node/215

www.keystoneaccountability.org/resources/guides

www.hivos.nl/%20content/download/.../1/.../2011RetolazaToCENG.

<http://www.theoryofchange.nl/>

c. Steps 5 and 6: Formulate a framework for monitoring, evaluation and learning

Developing a framework and procedures for staff members and partners to reflect on their ToC as they move on to implement their interventions and to revise it based on their experiences as lessons learnt is therefore key. The facilitator or another staff members in the organization may develop this framework based on the change pathways and assumptions identified by stakeholders in the workshop described above and present a draft to relevant staff members and partners who will work to implement the framework. Their final inputs are important to ensure ownership and commitment to its implementation.

The framework for monitoring, evaluation and learning is described in previous chapters (and also on Annex 5) and will usually include information about the following:

- What are the assumptions about the project/programme implementation, the stakeholders and beneficiaries or the context that will be monitored and tested during implementation?
- How and when will these assumptions be assessed?
- How will the intervention assess expected and unexpected (positive/negative) outcomes of the intervention and their significance?
- Who will be involved in this?
- How often will critical reflection of the change pathway take place and how will the results be used to adapt plans going forward?

4.2 What is required of the facilitator and who should facilitate your Theory of Change process?

The key role of the facilitator is to ensure that the process reaches its stated goals with the highest possible buy-in from all relevant stakeholders and to shape a process that creates **understanding**, **commitment** and **motivation** among all participants so that they are prepared to 'live' 'implement' and 'test' the ToC once developed. The outcome of the process is to be decided by stakeholders in the early planning stage and the facilitator will work to facilitate the process accordingly.

This requires solid skills and ability of the facilitator during the process in general and in workshops in particular to

- Communicate the process, why it is important and how it can contribute to improve the work of the organization, the programme or the project – and benefit our joint learning
- Be explorative and appreciative of everybody's contribution – when things don't make sense it is usually because we haven't understood it right – rarely because the person articulating a point of view is insane.
- Listen well and consider participants' interests, needs and concerns.
- Stimulate the participation of all participants and utilize the knowledge and resources of everybody
- Follow-up and ensure that everybody is well informed.
- Keep momentum and maintain energy throughout the process.

The Facilitator

- is effective in using core methods (distinguishes process from content)
- carefully manages relationships and prepares thoroughly (scoping)
- uses time and space intentionally
- is capable of maintaining objectivity
- is skilled in reading the underlying dynamics of the group
- releases blocks to the process
- is able to adapt to the changing situation
- assumes responsibility for the group journey
- can produce powerful documentation
- demonstrates professionalism, self-confidence, and authenticity
- maintains personal integrity

Who should facilitate your Theory of Change process?

One of the most challenging aspects of Theory of Change is that of being able to think outside of your usual box: The process is designed to inspire greater reflection about how you work and the sequence of changes you want to be able to influence. For that reason, it is not always easy or advisable for a staff member to facilitate a Theory of Change process in his or her own organisation. You sometimes need a “safe pair of hands” who will challenge the organisation in its way of thinking (“So why do you really think awareness raising leads to action” What evidence have you got? Are there other strategies that you could consider etc.?”)

Equally, it may be challenging for a member of staff based in Denmark to facilitate a ToC process for a Southern partner: there may be issues of power dynamics to consider - will the partner really want to share their own vision and agenda with their donors?

It is worth taking time at the outset to decide who would be best placed to facilitate the process, as this will affect the success of your efforts

4.3 Checklist of questions to assure quality in your Theory of Change (source DFID 2013)

Whoever is finally selected to lead the ToC process, the following checklist should be used as a guide to ensure that all elements are covered:

Clear analysis of the context and wider change process sought

- Is there a clear ‘story’ about the actors, factors and stakeholders at play in a specific context and on a specific **issue**?
- Is it a strategic response to a contextual analysis and assessment of external and internal learning?
- Is there a discussion on how power relations exist and how these might shift for the most vulnerable or excluded groups?

- Is it clear on how systemic changes are expected to emerge as a result of the actions of the intervention and other actors and factors in the system (ToC)?

Clearly articulated vision of change and process of change sought

- Is the vision conceptually clear and specific?
- Is the change process conceptually clear, logical but with non-linearity expressed?
- Are the hypothetical causal pathways mapped, with no missing links, specific to the programme in its context, and not a generic response?

Assumptions are made explicit, categorised and linked to specific aspects

- Have the assumptions been made explicit, in relation to different aspects of the theory of change:
 - about how change is understood to happen - paradigms and worldviews informing this
 - the enabling and constraining factors –
 - the contextual conditions
 - other actors, stakeholders and beneficiaries
 - strategy and implementation options
- Does the narrative describe key 'pathways' (i.e. the hypothetical sequences of change, sometimes called results or outcomes chains)?
- Does the programme make explicit its 'drivers of change' (i.e. how its interventions interact with the context to influence change)
- Are the strategic options described in relation to the drivers of change?

Assessment of external learning and evidence for key change drivers and cause-effect links

- Is there a narrative assessment of learning / evidence for key assumptions and change pathways? Is the strength of the evidence assessed?
- Are the aspects that are poorly understood flagged?
- Does the assessment make sense given the sources referred to?

Documentation, communication and wide ownership

- Is the ToC used regularly in discussion and communication both internally as well as externally?
- Can it be easily summarised verbally by a wide range of stakeholders?
- Is the ToC documentation available, describing different stages of ToC development and use (ToC visual summary, ToC paper, etc.)?
- Are there different products tailored for different stakeholders and uses?
- Are changes in the ToC over time captured and documented?

Active use of ToC in planning, M&E and management processes

- Is the ToC explicitly used in strategic planning and in the design and practice of M&E?
- Do monitoring and/or evaluation questions pick up on where cause-effect links are poorly understood?
- Are regular reviews and adaptation of the ToC integrated into management process and reviews planned in, at least once a year?

ANNEXES:

ANNEX 1:

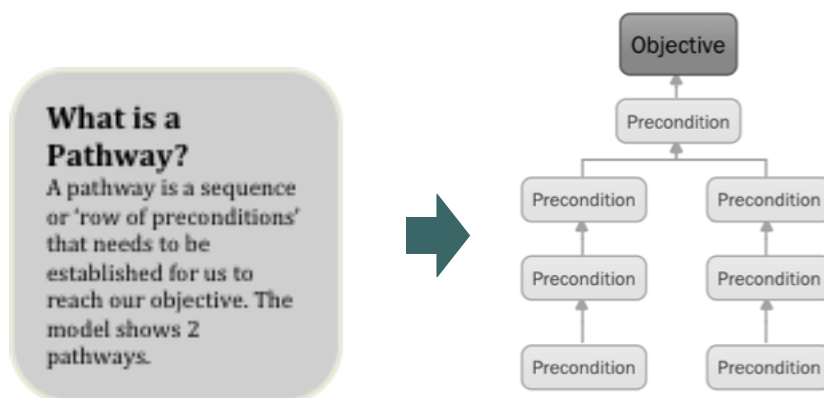
HOW TO PREPARE CHANGE PATHWAYS?

During the process of drafting this inspirational guide, the authors were presented to several questions related to practicing a ToC approach. This annex seeks to address some of the most frequently asked questions and challenges articulated by programme and project planners and practitioners working to apply a ToC approach in their own organization or with their own programme or project.

Pathways basic components

Creating pathways that explains our 'change logic' is a key component in a ToC approach – equal to step 3 in the ToC circle outlined in chapter 2. Pathways consists of the following four components:

- Component 1:** ***An objective or goal to which the project, programme or organization would want to be held accountable.*** The objective – or end result – should be as specific and measurable as possible. This makes it easier to identify the various preconditions/intermediate results that should be created to reach the end objective later on.
- Component 2:** ***'Logical flows' of preconditions for changes*** that must be in place for the programme or project to reach its goals. Preconditions are those conditions which do not yet exist and which we must contribute to achieve to reach our long-term goal. Very often one condition or state cannot be achieved before a prior precondition has been reached: For example, people need to know that they have rights and where to claim them before they can start claiming these rights.



Component 3: ***An assumption is something that is accepted as true or likely to happen but there is no proof (yet). Assumptions underpin our understanding of how change works,** and **why** the chosen programmatic priorities or project framework functions better than others. Being explicit about our assumptions also helps identify **gaps** and unmet **needs**, including additional necessary activities or actors that should be engaged.*

Component 4: ***A narrative.** A narrative is the 'executive' summary of your change pathway for change. It explains your intervention logic, the key preconditions/changes and implicit assumptions that inform your interventions. Graphically illustrated change pathways are often difficult to understand for outsiders and people who didn't participate in their making. Therefore, the narrative serves to communicate your intervention logic and thinking about how change happens to a broader audience of donors, partners and other stakeholders.*

Assumptions or risks – an example:

In Central Asia, a group of organizations wished to raise awareness among migrants and strengthen their negotiation skills so that they could defend their rights in front of Russian border guards when crossing the border.

The underlying assumption behind the intervention was that migrants could speak with the guards in their language (Russian). Assessing the assumption, organizations realized that this was not the case. Half the migrants targeted did not speak Russian. Language barriers were – in other words – a major risk. To cope with risk, organizations included another precondition in their pathway for change: Namely, that migrants should be equipped with basic Russian language skills, or have access to a hotline of Russian speaking people, who could help them, if they got in trouble.

How to prepare myself to make a Change Pathway (or more)?

Before you make your change pathways, make sure you have done a proper analysis of the situation that you want to change and the actors and stakeholders to the change process. This equals step 1 and 2 in the ToC reflection circle described in Chapter 1:

Who are the beneficiaries of your programme? What is their situation? What are the key barriers to an improvement of their situation? Who can contribute to change this situation – and what are the attitudes among the possible change makers towards your beneficiaries?

The more you know about the situation, the attitudes, interests and concerns of those who are influenced by and able to influence the situation, the easier it is to define realistic change pathways for your intervention. This exercise is no different from what you would do if applying an LFA approach to your strategic planning

How to make a pathway?

Step 1:

Formulate an end goal. The goal should be as specific as possible and be formulated as positive changes for specific stakeholder groups. Try to avoid bureaucratic language or 'development lingo'. The more specific and easy it is for you to visualize your goal and explain it in plain language, the easier it will be to create your change pathways.

- E.g. By 2017 over 50% of Dalit girls in region XXXX, will be attending school on a regular basis and enjoying equal opportunities and treatment staff and pupils.
- By 2020 women dairy farmers in Arusha Tanzania will have formed effective working dairy cooperatives and will enjoy the benefits of a successful small business

Step 2:

Think backwards: What is the last condition or change that must have been realized, before the goal is achieved? And the condition before that? Make a brainstorm – use cards – of all the (pre)conditions/changes that needs to be fulfilled if you are to achieve your result. Avoid preconditions that would be nice to have. Include only those preconditions that are necessary to create to reach your result.

Next, put all the cards in order, starting with the first condition or change that has to be realized. You should be able to link the cards with a causal 'if-then' formulation between each step. In this way, you make sure that there is a logical and causal link between all your preconditions/changes.

Step 3:

Test your logic by checking your own, underlying assumptions. ***An assumption is something that is accepted as true or likely to happen but there is no proof (yet)***. Assumptions that turn out to be problematic are risks. Risks should be accounted for in your pathways to strengthen the likelihood that you will reach your end results. This means you would need to revise your pathway and add additional preconditions if your assumption turns out to be problematic – or to make your end goals more realistic in case you are unable to address critical assumptions .

Step 4:

Make a short narrative. Preferably no more than 3 pages. For smaller programme components one page should suffice.

Optional:

Step 5:

Visual language: Draw an accountability line in your pathway so as to visualize your sphere of direct influence and distinguish this from your sphere of indirect influence and interest. This will make evaluation easier later on.

Are pathways always linear?

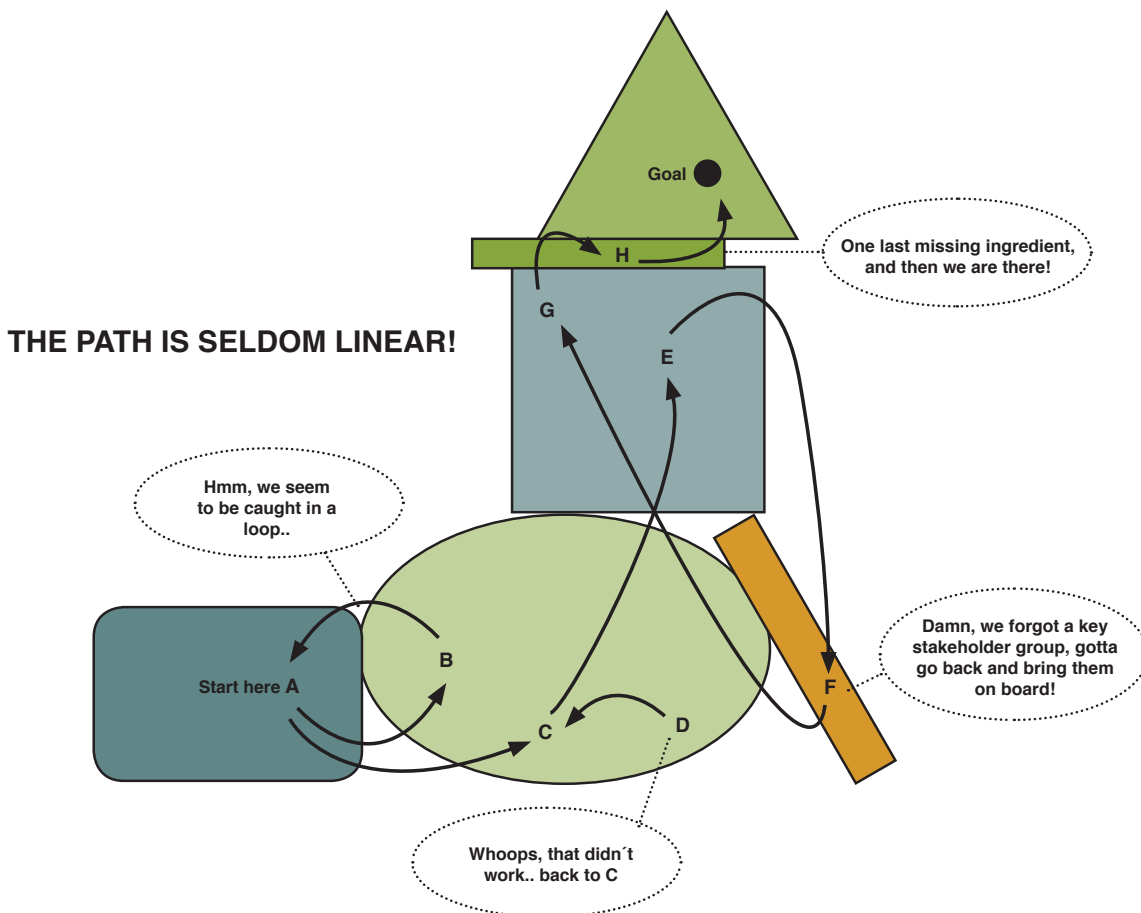
Social change processes are rarely linear. But our thinking about change tends to be more or less linear.

Therefore, it is important to remember that our pathways for change always remain our 'best bet' of how we think change will happen. Our pathways are mental models of our understanding about the context that we operate in, which we should reflect on and revise, as our understanding about change improves, based on our experiences and lessons learnt.

The pathways presented in the graphical outline below represents Danida's Theory of Change on the Danish support to Civil Society.

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ANNEX 2:

HOW TO PREPARE A NARRATIVE TO ACCOMPANY YOUR CHANGE PATHWAY?

What is a narrative?

A narrative is the 'executive' summary of your theory of change and graphically illustrated pathway. It explains your intervention logic – how and why you think you can contribute to desired changes, the key preconditions/changes and implicit assumptions that informs your interventions and which you want to assess during your monitoring and evaluation work.

The narrative is the last thing you do when preparing your ToC. At this point, the intervention logic should be clear to all participants involved in preparing the ToC. Therefore, your narrative should be as short and clear as possible and include the following elements:

- How and why do we think that our intervention contributes to desired changes?
- What are the assumptions underlying our thinking about change (assumptions can be internal to the programme management, external to programme stakeholders beneficiaries and contextual)
- What will we do to assess the realism of our assumptions on an on-going basis and revise our ToC accordingly

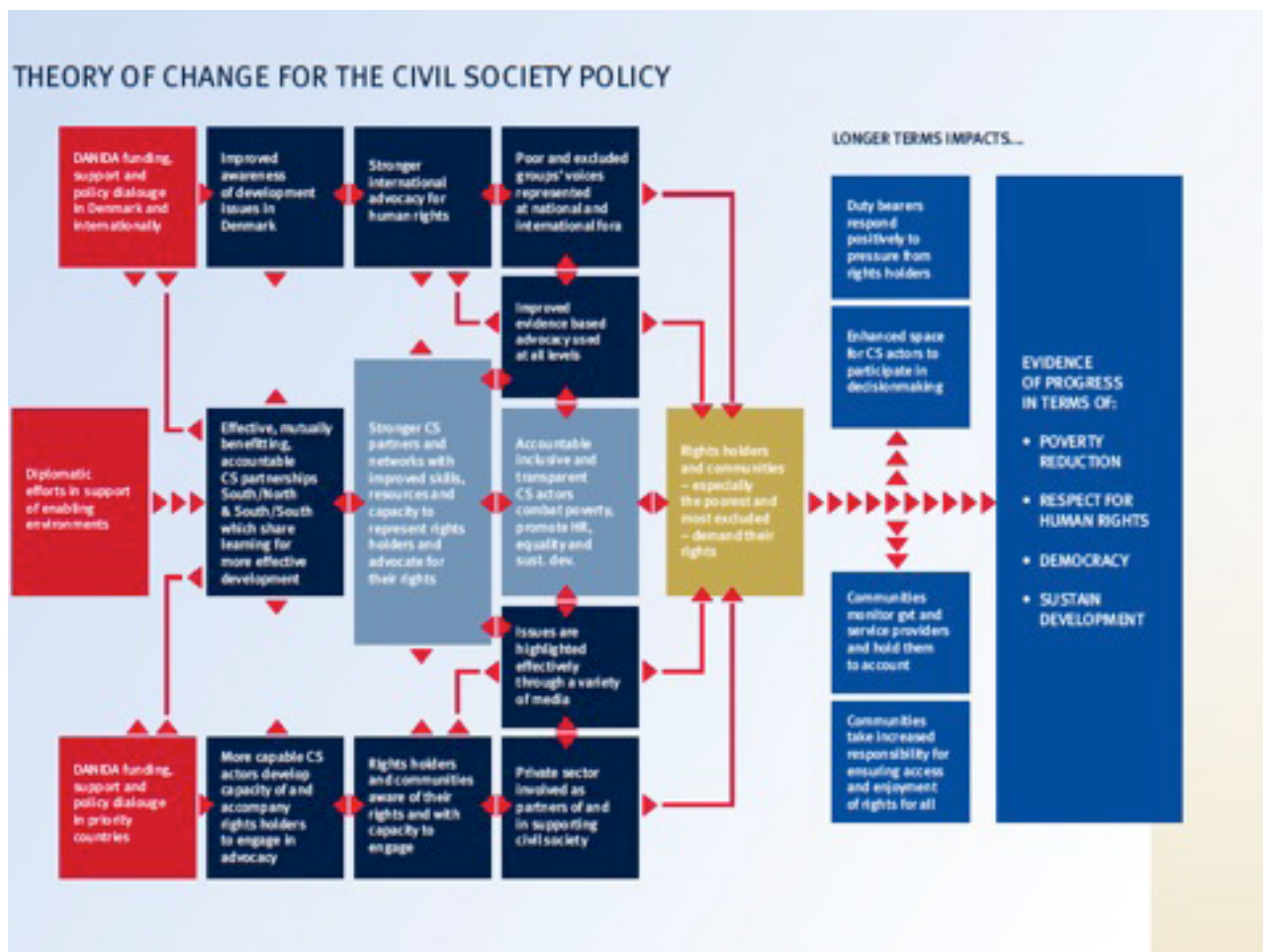
NB: a narrative does not replace a description of activities, structures for programme management etc. This is still to be unfolded in separate sections.

Why do we need a narrative?

A Theory of Change approach is a process and a product. It is a reflection process for those involved in planning, which leads to a joint understanding of how we think we can bring about a desired change and consequently what we need to do to bring about intended changes. The outcome of this process results in a product – a graphical illustration of our thinking which can be transferred into an LFA (see section 3 below).

Most graphical ToCs are hard to understand for outsiders, however. Therefore, we need a narrative to communicate to outsiders what we want to change and how we think we can bring about that change. The second purpose of a narrative is to highlight the rationale behind our thinking. Consciousness about our rationale enables us to reflect and learn as we move on to implement our programme. It enables us to ask the question: does change really happen the way we think?

The pathways presented in the graphical outline below represents Danida's Theory of Change on the Danish support to Civil Society.



The theory of change for Danida's support to civil society seems to be that 'if civil society actors have capacity and to hold decision makers accountable and if space is available for civil society actors to participate, then will rights-holders and communities be able to claim their rights. This will contribute to reduce poverty, strengthen democracy and promote sustainable development.

This theory of change contains interesting implicit assumptions about change, which may only be tested against reality as it unfolds:

- Authorities will actually listen to civil societies if civil society actors have the capacity and claim their rights, or are there circumstances where this is not happening? Are other preconditions needed to ensure government accountability to citizens' claims?
- Stronger international advocacy for human rights contributes to greater representation of the voices of poor and excluded groups in national and international fora?
- Listening to civil society claims and concerns always supports sustainable development and poverty reduction?
- Authorities have the capacity to respond to needs and claims of civil societies once they understand the need.

We can only explore the assumptions – and learn more about the role of civil society in development – if we are conscious of them, and raise questions accordingly. Our narrative should help us build that consciousness so that we can explore the plausibility of our assumptions as we implement our programme or as part of a real-time or end of programme evaluation.

Check list for drafting the narrative

Use the following ten points as your headers, and provide concise description under each

1. A summary of the key challenges and underlying causes that the programme seeks to address
2. Your overall vision for the programme
3. Your understanding of preconditions for successful achievement of this vision (including elements that you won't work on but you see as necessary preconditions)
4. An analysis of your own role and contributions in relation to point 3 above
5. Your own goal for this programme
6. A description of what you will do with whom
7. A description of the sequence of changes you would expect to see in both the short and medium term for different stakeholder groups; and how they link together and support each other (diagram)
8. A brief rationale for why you have opted for this particular way of working (in preference to other modalities) - including an analysis of potential strengths and weaknesses of the different options
9. A summary of any assumptions you have made and that you will need to test throughout the lifetime of the programme
10. A brief explanation of how and when your assumptions will be tested and how the results will be fed back into your plans

ANNEX 3:

PRACTICAL EXAMPLE: HOW TO USE THEORY OF CHANGE TO DEVELOP A MORE ROBUST RESULTS FRAMEWORK

In planning a new programme in SE Asia (2014) one organisation decided to develop a Theory of Change first, and then, based on this, to develop their log frame.

They hired two consultants. Working together and having completed several rounds of consultation and a lot of preparatory work, the consultants facilitated a five day workshop with the with the ambitious remit of developing both the change pathway and a methodology for critical reflection; and a results framework for the programme, which included indicators, targets and milestones and a methodology for collecting and analysing data.

The Theory of Change Element

1. On days 1-3, they worked through steps 1-4 of the ToC cycle described in Chapter 1. They produced a draft change pathway with assumptions to test.



Example of assumptions they plan to test in relation to collaboration and cooperation:

- There are partners in countries of operation that are willing and able to cooperate with us
- We have strong and mutually reinforcing relationships with the CSOs we are working with
- Collaborating agencies understand each others roles and functions
- Collaborating agencies are working to similar values and shared goals

- The participants then developed a protocol for testing their assumptions and critically reflecting on their pathway:

We have developed and built into our annual plans, a process for critical reflection of our roles and change pathway.

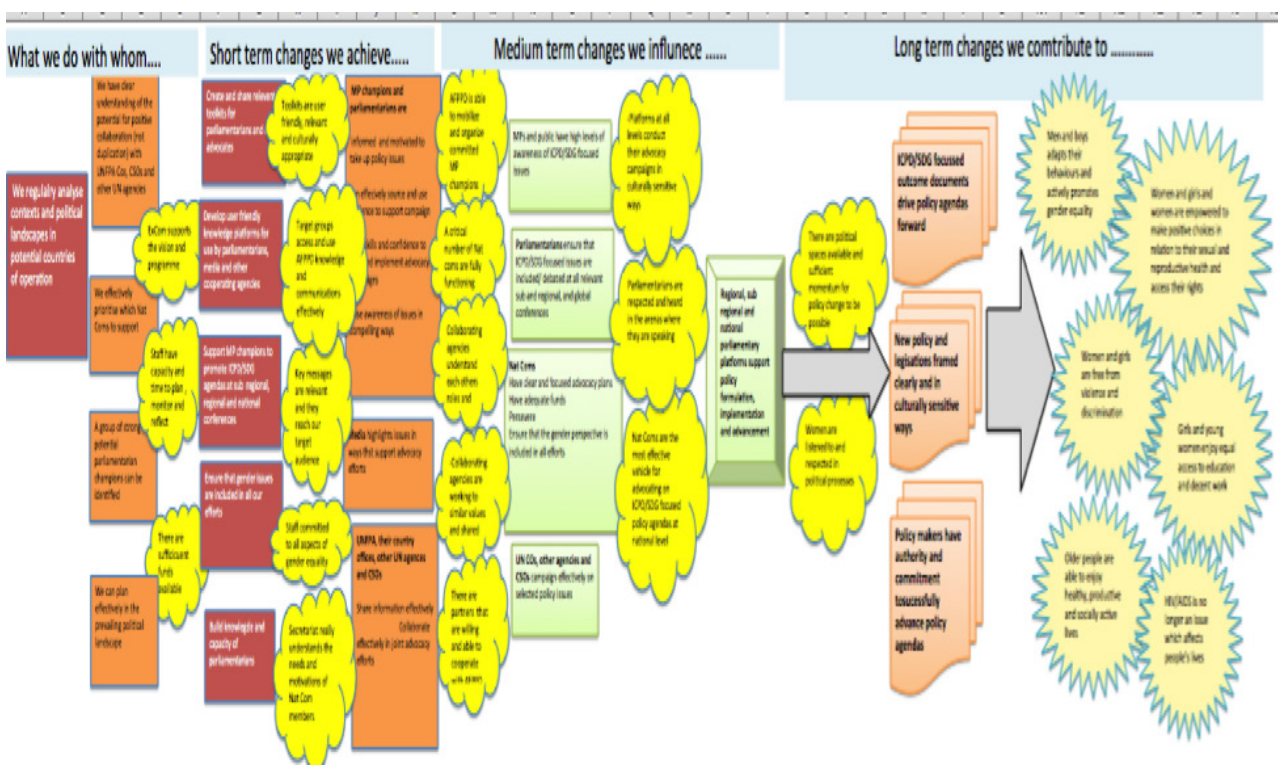
We have planned six monthly reflection meetings in which we will:

- *Reflect on what's changed in terms of political context – policies, parliaments, people, priorities in the period*
- *In relation to our pathway and changes we expected to see, discuss and agree:*
 - o *What has actually changed? For whom?*
 - o *Were these changes positive/negative/intended/unintended?*
 - o *What (if anything) do we contribute to them (who/what else might have influenced these changes?*
 - o *How significant is this for our planned pathway?*
- *Test some of our key assumptions against the short term changes we plan to achieve*
- *Consider how we should adapt our pathway in the light of this?*

We have agreed that we will revise our pathway on an annual basis to reflect the results of this learning.

- The graphic above has now been enlarged as is posted in the staff kitchen. Staff are continually reflecting on this pathway and are encouraged to stick new post its on the chart when they have reflections to make about how planned changes are happening in the real world. This on going reflection is used at the six monthly reflection meetings

- Meanwhile, they have developed a “static diagram” to share with donors and others:



The Results Framework:

On days 3-5, participants then worked in smaller groups to develop the log frame based on this pathway. Each group took one of the outcome areas and identified outputs, activities and inputs for each. They then worked on the development of indicators, milestones and targets, and assumptions and confirmed how data for each set of indicators would be collected.

Annex 2: Results and Resources Framework						
Programme outcomes and outputs	Indicators	Baseline ¹	Target ²	Partners	Indicative Resources (USD, annually)	Assumptions
Outcome : A strengthened parliamentary platform for conducting policy dialogue and supporting policy formulation, implementation and monitoring of the ICPD Programme of Action in the context of the SDGs	# of countries that included ICPD targets into their national SDGs plans % of national budget devoted to ICPD PoA programmes # of Natcoms participating in their country's SDG national plan adoption process # of Natcoms with policy agenda, action plan and mechanisms to achieve ICPD PoA	n/a	tbd			Parliamentarians will effectively influence government policy through their advocacy Governments will be open to including ICPD issues in their national plans
Output 1:						
Enhanced capacity of Natcoms and MPs to advocate to parliament and governments for the integration of ICPD PoA in their national sustainable development plans	# of MPS and Natcoms openly advocating on ICPD issues in parliament with their governments	# of MPs to be identified #of NAT COMs: South Asia – 2 Southeast Asia – 7 Other regions –	Double the # 2 per year per sub-region	UNFPA COs IPPF MAs SA/SAIVAC Other NAT COMs		Conducive political environment Natcoms are committed and able to deliver – the right people are involved and turnover is addressed.
	# of meetings between Natcoms and government officials to further the ICPD PoA	n/a	tbd			
Output 2:						
Increased visibility of AFPPD parliamentary advocacy towards full achievement of ICPD in context of SDGs	# and type of media that cover ICPD issues, and their integration into the SDGs	TV 2 Print 2 Online 6 Social Media 300		FCCT (Foreign Correspondence Club Thailand)		Spokespersons will respond in a credible and timely manner. We can identify key media outlets (popular and interested in ICPD issues) and that they will be

¹ The baseline was not available for all indicators at the time of preparing this document. It will be established immediately upon inception of the programme.

² Targets will be finalized as soon as the full baseline is established

Narratives were then drawn up for both elements and submitted to the donor.

The organisation has negotiated a midway point in the four-year programme for the adaptation and updating of the log frame

Note: Participating staff struggled at the beginning of the workshop to see the point of doing both exercises, but having gone through the process and seeing how the two fit together and support each other, they report that they feel confident to use both elements for their different purposes.

ANNEX 4:

HOW TO HOW TO USE A TOC APPROACH TO DEVELOP AN LFA AND IDENTIFY RELEVANT INDICATORS

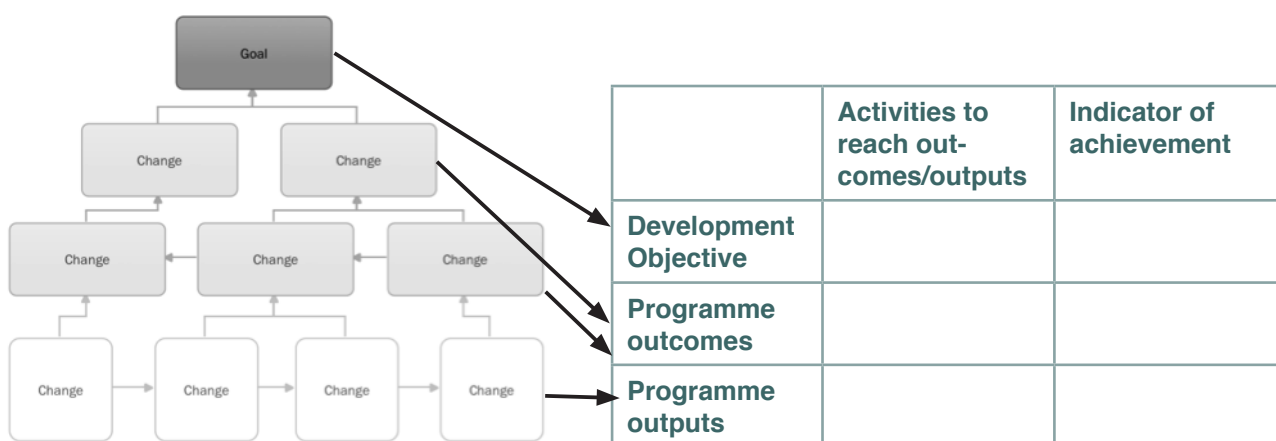
As explained in Chapter 1 and described in Annex 2, a ToC approach can help you identify

- How you think change happens in your context (Step 1 in the ToC circle)
- What changes your work needs to contribute to, to achieve desired goals (Step 2 in the ToC circle)
- How and why you think incremental changes are related and will contribute to desired goals (the change pathways described as step 3 in the ToC circle)

The change pathways will help you identify which outputs, outcomes, related indicator and activities you would need to include in your LFA. In addition, it will help you reduce the risk that you omit important elements in your LFA. Or, as explained by organizations who are working simultaneously with both a ToC approach and the LFA: 'LFA is also good (because it creates a full overview of what we need to do, red), but you may miss some steps (if you don't apply the ToC approach too, red)'

The relationship between change pathways and an LFA can roughly be illustrated as follows

TOC Change Pathway



4.1 How to use a ToC approach to identify relevant indicators in an LFA

As described above, the ToC approach can help identify what changes your programme and project may have to contribute to in order, to achieve desired goals, and why and how these changes are necessary in your context.

Once you know what changes you need to contribute to, identifying relevant indicators so that you can verify the realization of planned outputs and outcomes in your LFA is often not that difficult.

There are basically 3 different kinds of indicators and ways to measure if changes (outputs and outcomes) have been achieved:

- **Yes/no indicators and assessments:**

These involve determining whether something has happened or not. Generally this is pretty easy as long as the changes (outcomes and outputs in the LFA) you want to make are sufficiently precise: Are community groups formed or not? Have community groups been trained in advocacy or not?

While yes/no indicators are easy to apply, their 'all or nothing' quality make them quite useless for tracking progress (or noting lack of progress) towards shorter term changes or outcomes such as 'groups empowered to claim their rights' or 'community resilience toward natural disasters increased'. The progress towards such changes or outcomes cannot be measured by a yes/no indicator but can be measured by numerical assessments or by scale based assessments:

- **Numerical indicators and assessments:**

These involve counting things. E.g. how often does a community group meet – and how does it change over time? This may be important to know since frequency of meetings may be an indication of how active the group is in claiming its rights and how motivated its members are.

Or out of a required repertoire of skills that community groups need to improve cooperation and address local authorities effectively, how many do they possess and how does this change over time?

The quantifiable nature of numerical assessments makes them easy to use for tracking progress by individuals or groups and for understanding beneficiaries aggregated progress toward outcomes that you have selected, based on your ToC pathways. However, not everything can be measured by counting: Individual's self-esteem, motivation and courage to address duty bearers that they didn't even know they had the right to talk to, before they entered the programme, may be one example. Group dynamics or the ability of a community group to solve conflicts peacefully may be another example. Measuring such qualitative indications of changes would often need a scale-based assessment:

- **Scale-based indicators and assessment:**

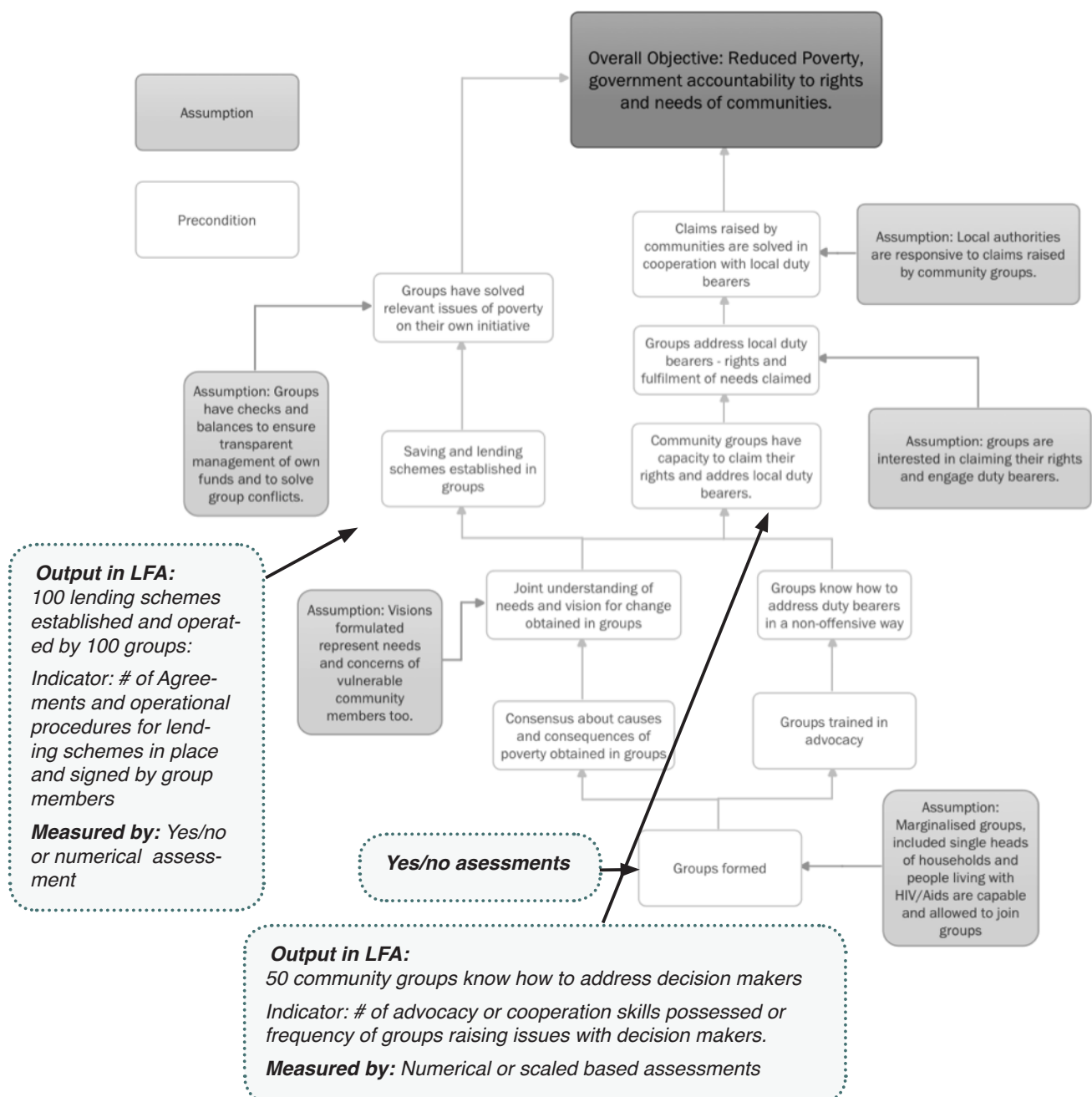
Outcome scales consists of 'ladders' or 'staircases' with measurable steps that programme participants/targets can move up on their way to achieving intermediate outcomes in a theory of change:

To what extent do group members in a group feel comfortable talking to other members in the group and share their opinion – or that they have no right to do so at all? To what extent do group members feel that their livelihood, wellbeing or future is in the hands of the destiny or merciful people, or is something that they themselves can master and influence in cooperation with other group members and authorities?

These issues may be important to assess to get an indication of the empowerment/powerlessness of target groups and the likelihood that they can (continue to) address and hold local authorities accountable even after the programme has left.

Such questions can be answered using scales that start at the lowest level and move incrementally toward a desirable level. Some scales can be based on statements where respondents have to 'strongly agree', 'agree', 'disagree' etc. while others may be statements reflecting certain states of mind where respondents may pick the one representing him/her best at a given point in time.

The homepage www.performwell.org has a rich source of examples of how social change organizations work with numerical and qualitative indicators and measurements to assess the progress of their work. The illustration below provides an example of how a project or programme can use a ToC approach to identify relevant outputs and outcomes for their LFA and development indicators for measuring their progress



ANNEX 5:

HOW CAN I USE A TOC APPROACH TO DOCUMENT RESULTS OF MY WORK?

The short answer is:

You cannot use a ToC approach to document results of your work directly. Rather, you can use it to strengthen your understanding about how change happens and how you will plan your work to achieve desired goals.

The slightly longer answer is:

You can use the ToC approach to inform and improve the quality of your LFA and increase the chances that the outputs and outcomes in your LFA (these are the short and long-term results of your work) are feasible, realistic and relevant to your goal. And you can use the ToC approach to identify a few, but measurable indicators for the longer-term change that you want to contribute to, as illustrated by the example above.

The last part is important because, paradoxically, many NGOs working for social change seems to be over-measuring their work and suffocating under the weight of data that they collect about the number of activities that they conduct, the number of people that they reach and the number of handouts they provide. Yet, much fewer make an effort to measure, understand and reflect upon the changes (shorter and longer term results) that these inputs and activities 'produce'. A ToC approach can help you articulate and identify which anticipated results that it may be relevant for you to measure as part of your results framework. The approach may also help you prioritize your efforts of measuring 'results' to a few, but crucial indications of change.

Thus, a using a ToC approach provides a potential for 'leaning' your documentation efforts and for concentrating your measuring of what really matters: Namely the results that activities and inputs produce for people.

It is important to note that using a ToC approach to inspire results monitoring usually leads to a disaster, if managed in a top-down, control and command manner. The best operational results monitoring takes place when owned and guided by field staff themselves. That is, when field staff participate in identifying the changes that takes place based on their work with people and in developing relevant indicators and measurements that are based on their own understanding of the change they facilitate.

1. Example of how one organisation uses its change pathways for critical reflection

The following illustration of how to use the change pathway has been adapted from the CDKN Country Programme Impact Monitoring Process. Its stated aims are to be simple and user friendly, and to be used for learning (NOT donor accountability). The information gathered is used for internal purposes only

Key Questions for Impact Monitoring (conducted in a workshop every 6-12 months)

Update on country context:

Report on any relevant updates or changes in climate change and development context and situation including:

- The institutional situation (authority/ies responsible for climate, any climate change unit, multi- sectoral councils for climate, etc.).
- The policy environment
- Research and knowledge management capacities.
- Existing forums, partnerships, networks and/or platforms on climate change
- Link between climate change and development. (How is it perceived? How is it handled?)
- Multi-sector dialogue mechanisms to discuss climate change issues.
- Other

1. Focus on expected changes

Refer to list of expected changes in impact baseline. For each report on:

- The changes, if any, that did take place and evidence to support your findings .If no change has taken place, an explanation of why this is (external/internal factors)
- The significance of any changes (and to whom it is significant, if relevant); and
- An assessment of CDKN's contribution to these changes

2. Focus on unexpected changes over the last six months

Please provide a brief summary of other changes in relation to your impact pathway. Identify any changes that have taken place against your baseline (or previous impact monitoring report). For each, state:

Changes that have taken place (please remember and report on both positive and negative changes)

- What has been the effect of these changes for different target groups?
- Who/what was responsible for these changes (there may be a number of actors and factors)?
- What, if anything did CDKN contribute to these changes? How confident are you in this answer (not very/a little/ very)? Provide evidence
- What assumptions have been tested? And what did you find out?

4. Analysis of findings and how this will affect your change pathways from this point forward:

- What can the programme and CDKN learn from these findings and analysis?
- How should the programme adapt as a result? Is there a need to revise the impact pathway? If so, please attach revised pathway with explanatory notes

5. Looking forward - the next six months

- What will be your main focus for the next six months? Which areas of change do you hope

to influence over the next six months? List up to 4 either short or medium term changes as appropriate. For each one, what do you expect/hope to see change in relation to this over the next six months? Specify:

- o Types of change for specific target groups
- o CDKN's contribution to this
- o What might help or hinder progress (e.g. political/ social/environmental/economic factors, change in personnel, capacity etc.)
- o What assumptions will you be testing?