Theory of change

Key components
• Have a common understanding on what is the Theory of Change approach and its value
• Understand the process for how to develop a Theory of Change
• Understand how to assess the quality of sector ToC narrative
WHAT IS A THEORY OF CHANGE?

• A representation of **how** and **why** a complex change process will succeed given specific assumptions
• A blueprint of all the building blocks needed to achieve the longer-term goals of a particular intervention
WHAT IS THE VALUE OF A THEORY OF CHANGE?

• All programmes are designed according to some kind of logic about what they are supposed to achieve.

• Complicated interventions can be difficult to explain and a ToC helps tell a common story for an organization.

• Think through the many underlying and root causes of the challenges that the sector is facing, and how they influence each other.

• Engage with research about how change is created, and provide a framework for learning.

• Develop and manage partnerships and partnership strategies.
HOW IS A THEORY OF CHANGE PRESENTED?

- A ToC can be a picture or a diagram
- Variety of templates can be used to show the pathways you could follow to achieve your desired change
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How is a Theory of Change Presented?

- A ToC can be a picture or a diagram
- Different templates can be used to show the pathways you could follow to achieve your desired change:
HOW TO CREATE A THEORY OF CHANGE? – KEY STEPS

1. Focus on the high-level change the sector intends to contribute to in the current context

2. Identify what is needed for the desired development change to happen

3. Establish and make explicit the related key assumptions underpinning the theory of how change happens, and major risks that may affect it.

4. Identify partners and actors who will be most relevant for achieving each result, taking into account the related risks and assumptions.

Validate with evidence and stakeholder consultation

Focus

Identify what is needed for change

Identify partners and actors

Reflect assumptions and risks
• Identify the current situation and the desired change
• Identify the current situation and the desired change
• Conduct a “backwards mapping” to identify what is needed to achieve that desired change
HOW TO CREATE A THEORY OF CHANGE – CHANGE ANALYSIS

• Identify the current situation and the desired change
• Conduct a “backwards mapping” to identify what is needed to achieve that desired change
• Identify the “IF.... THEN” interventions and activities needed to achieve key changes
• Analyse the **risks and assumptions**

• **Assumptions**: things/events accepted as certain to happen

• Assumptions can be about any node in a theory of change, or the causal linkages between them

• **Risks**: a component of uncertainty in the intervention; they either happen, or not.

• When they happen, risks block the pathway of change. Need to think of mitigation strategies!

Change is rarely linear!
• ToC requires you articulate underlying assumptions which can then be tested, evaluated, and measured
• ToC requires you understand which causal linkages are strongest, and which may require more research and evaluation.
• Example of assumptions in Basic Assistance:

“In order to achieve LCRP impacts, we assume that...

1- “... MPC beneficiaries have access to markets, service providers and civil authorities”

2- We also assume that “... MPC beneficiaries do not save any amount of their assistance before meeting their basic needs”
• Think through your results chain (the core of your ToC), from sector inputs to overall impact

• **Outputs** are short term results, which are achieved immediately after an activity has taken place. They are considered within the **sphere of control** of the sector.

• **Outcomes** are medium term results, which may take a few years to achieve. Being within the **sphere of influence** of the sector

• **Impact** is the highest level outcome, and is often the ultimate goal, that may take many years to change.

• Outside the sphere of control or influence, but by working with a wide range of **stakeholders**, the sector can build a likely story that it is making a stronger contribution to LCRP impact.
• A stakeholder mapping is a first step to help you better understand your sector’s sphere of influence
• Identify and understand the other stakeholders who also influence this sphere
• Identify partnerships, through which your sphere of control or influence might even expand
• The theory of change should help clarify:
  ➢ which partner does what,
  ➢ in which areas two or more entities are expected to work together,
  ➢ where collaboration is necessary to achieve the expected change, and
  ➢ how to avoid overlapping to maximize the use of available resources.
1. Validate the **focus** of the ToC
2. Identify **solutions** to the problems that need to be addressed
3. Validate the **division of labour** among partners and partnership strategies
4. Identify and test **risks & assumptions** based on available evidence
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality assurance checklist to ensure a theory of change:</th>
<th>YES / NO</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Is based on a collaborative and participatory process, involving multiple stakeholder perspectives and allowing the views of women, youth, duty-bearers, claim-holders and vulnerable communities to be reflected during theory of change development and validation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Is clearly targeted towards changes that will benefit the most vulnerable and marginalized individuals and groups</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shows a plausible, clear, logical flow to describe how the planned intervention intends to contribute to the desired changes at outcome and impact level, without any gaps in logic</td>
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<tr>
<td>Is ideally presented with a diagram and embedded in the narrative of sector chapters</td>
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<tr>
<td>Refers to evidence, knowledge and lessons learned from credible sources such as evaluations, assessments, monitoring, surveys, as well as to national capacity assessments and strategies</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Clearly states assumptions and risks most relevant to whether change will be realized</td>
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<td>Identifies who does what within the sector, as well as any other key partners and actors whose common effort will be required in order for change to take place</td>
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<tr>
<td>Identifies limitations in the available evidence basis for the theory of change that can be used to test the assumptions and the pathway of change</td>
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<tr>
<td>Envisages sustainable and inclusive changes by looking to strengthen the effectiveness of institutions and mechanisms that are tasked to monitor, track and empower those who are left behind or at the risk of being left behind</td>
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<td>Addresses issues of inequality and discrimination by tackling root and underlying causes in addition to immediate causes</td>
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<td>Addresses or mitigates structural causes of violence and conflict that lead to or result from violation or non-fulfilment of rights</td>
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<td>Explicitly targets women and girls and ensures that they are equal beneficiaries of change</td>
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<tr>
<td>Addresses poverty-environment linkages and contributes to enhancing sustainability</td>
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### Quality assurance checklist to ensure a theory of change:

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<th>STATUS</th>
<th>Comments</th>
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<tr>
<td>Is based on a <strong>collaborative and participatory process</strong>, involving multiple stakeholder perspectives and allowing the views of women, youth, duty-bearers, claim-holders and vulnerable communities to be reflected during theory of change development and validation</td>
<td>Green</td>
<td>SitAn and strategy done in a participatory manner</td>
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<td>Is clearly targeted towards <strong>changes that will benefit the most vulnerable</strong> and marginalized individuals and groups</td>
<td>Green</td>
<td>Clear description of target groups</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shows a <strong>plausible, clear, logical flow</strong> to describe how the sector strategy intends to contribute to the desired changes at outcome and impact level, without any gaps in logic</td>
<td>Green</td>
<td>Outputs to outcomes ok, but needs to clarify sector outcomes’ contribution to LCRP impact</td>
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| Is ideally presented with a **diagram** and embedded in the narrative of the sector chapter | Green | Diagram: no
Narrative: yes |
<p>| <strong>Refers to evidence</strong>, knowledge and lessons learned from credible sources such as evaluations, assessments, monitoring, surveys, as well as to national capacity assessments and strategies | Green | Evidence and research are well used for the SitAn, less so to justify chosen outputs or outcomes |
| Clearly states <strong>assumptions and risks</strong> most relevant to whether change will be realized | Red | There is little mention of any assumption and risk |
| Identifies <strong>who does what</strong> within the sector, as well as any other key partners and actors whose common effort will be required in order for change to take place | Red | Partners involved and having influence on results should be mentioned |
| Identifies <strong>limitations in the available evidence basis</strong> for the theory of change that can be used to test the assumptions and the pathway of change | Red | No mention of learning needs, knowledge gaps |</p>
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<tr>
<th><strong>Objective</strong></th>
<th><strong>What is a Theory of Change</strong></th>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>What is the value of a Theory of Change</strong></th>
<th><strong>How is a Theory of Change presented</strong></th>
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<th><strong>How to create a Theory of Change</strong></th>
<th><strong>Quality assurance checklist</strong></th>
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<th><strong>Theoretical Framework</strong></th>
<th><strong>Quality assurance checklist</strong></th>
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| **Envisages sustainable and inclusive changes by looking to strengthen the effectiveness of institutions and mechanisms** that are tasked to monitor, track and empower those who are left behind or at the risk of being left behind | Institutions strengthening is one of the priority mentioned in the strategy |
| Addresses issues of inequality and discrimination by tackling root and underlying causes in addition to immediate causes | In the SitAn, backed up with evidence |
| Addresses or mitigates structural causes of violence and conflict that lead to or result from violation or non-fulfilment of rights | As a cross-cutting issue |
| Explicitly targets women and girls and ensures that they are equal beneficiaries of change | As a cross-cutting issue, yet not enough disaggregated data in the narrative |
| Addresses humanitarian-development-environment linkages and contributes to enhancing sustainability | There is little elaboration on this, though a section on stabilization and institutional strengthening |
THANK YOU!
Example of assumptions in Basic Assistance:

In order to achieve impacts 2 and 3, we assume that:

1- “MPC beneficiaries have access to markets, service providers and civil authorities”, e.g. that beneficiaries can spend their assistance, without facing any restrictions in accessing markets to buy food, health and education related items, service providers (school and medical centers) and civil authorities.

2- We can also assume that “MPC beneficiaries do not save any amount of their assistance before meeting their basic needs”. Once these are met, households may decide to allocate excess cash into savings.