Session 2: Developing Your Activity Theory of Change and Results Framework

Photo: Lauren Seibert, Peace Corps
Definition

What is a “theory of change”?

• A theory of change describes a *process* of desired change.

• A theory of change contains a set of hypotheses, outcomes, and assumptions that make up causal pathways of change needed to bring about a desired long-term goal.

• What are hypotheses?
Why do we need a Theory of Change?

- To build a common understanding around the process needed to achieve a desired change.
- To make explicit how activities and outputs will interact within the context.
- To highlight gaps and intellectual leaps in assumptions.
- To help identify critical junctures in the change process.
- To have a conceptual map that articulates underlying assumptions, and the links between actions and outcomes.
- To identify critical areas addressed by external actors and how the program will link to them.
- To provide a detailed map showing pathways of change (e.g., how multiple activities will lead to achievement of short and longer term goals).
Elements of a Theory of Change

- Problem statement
- Causal analysis
- Long-term goal
- Pathways of change
- Assumptions
- Stakeholder analysis
- Interventions
Problem Statement

• Define the Problem Statement
  – What
  – Who
  – Where

• Examples:
  – High stunting in children under five living in Haka province
  – Low income for small-business women living in Dera city
Causal Analysis

• Conduct causal analysis

  • What are the main causes of the problem you have identified?

• Map the key underlying causes of the problem, and create a causal stream. Make sure to include all significant social, economic, political, historical, cultural, and geographic factors.
Example of a Causal Stream

Problem: Low Farm Family Income

- Cause: Declining Crop Yields
  - Cause: Severe Soil Erosion
    - Cause: Farmers use improper plowing techniques
      - Cause: Farmers unaware of benefits of contour plowing
        - Cause: No access to extension services or information
Long-term Goal

- Identify the Long-Term Goal

  - Enduring impact in the lives of the target group
  - E.g. Stunting eliminated amongst children under 5 in Haka province
Pathway of Change

- Identify Domains of Change
- Map pathways of change within these domains
- Pathways of change show sequential outcomes or conditions that must be realized before the next higher outcome in the chain can be achieved.
Pathway of Change

• Numerous outcomes are part of each pathway of change, and contribute to the long-term goal.

• Multiple pathways lead towards the long-term goal.
Goal: Improved food security for rural households

Problem: Food insecurity among poor rural households

Pathways of Change

Stakeholders

Assumptions

Improved livestock production
- Outcome
- Outcome
- Outcome

Improved crop productivity
- Outcome
- Outcome
- Outcome

Outcome
Outcome
Outcome
Outcome
Map a Pathway of Change

Goal: Improved food and income security for crop-based livelihoods in rural districts of Nueva Rivas

- Increased crop production
  - Reduced post-harvest loss
  - Improved soil fertility
  - Renewed soil micro-organisms
  - Reduced loss of topsoil, destruction of agricultural lands
  - Preventative measures to protect agricultural land (terracing, drainage maintenance)
  - Improved knowledge on risk management and mitigation and NRM

- Increased income
  - Increased market utilization
  - Increased access to farm inputs
  - Increased access to extension services
  - Improved access to financial services
  - Improved entrepreneurial literacy
  - Increased use of financial services

- Assumptions:
  - A: Regular exposure to flooding/drought
  - R: Low literacy & numeracy limits entrepreneurial development/ aspiration
  - A: limited access to education

- Government policy support/ advocacy
- Improved infrastructure and public services
Assumptions

• Pathways of Change are based on assumptions.

• Assumptions are underlying conditions that are important to the success of a pathway, but are beyond your control.

Use available evidence to support/form assumptions
Stakeholder analysis

• Identify potential stakeholders (social, economic, political, cultural actors) and their level of interest
• Assess each stakeholder’s power and influence and how this affects each pathway of change
• Identify assumptions related to stakeholder power
Interventions

• The Theory of Change helps identify the most critical, or strategic interventions.

• Three components of the ToC process will help select a pathway of change and set of interventions:
  – a thorough review of necessary and sufficient outcomes (Assumptions)
  – a good understanding of your manageable interest and timeline of action available to you
  – a good understanding of stakeholder interests
Test your Theory of Change by asking is it...

- Plausible
- Feasible
- Testable
Group Work

1. Review the NUTSENAG case study, with a particular focus on the Theory of Change section

2. Draw the NUTSENAG Theory of Change clearly illustrating:
   - The Problem Statement
   - Causal Stream
   - Long-term Goal
   - Pathway(s) of Change
   - Assumptions
   - Stakeholder(s)
Plausible • Feasible • Testable
Theory of Change: Redux

- Recall that a Theory of Change helps us identify the problem we want to focus on, the root causes of it, our long-term goal, pathways to achieve our long-term goal, and assumptions that undergird those pathways.

- And then, it helps us choose the pathway(s) we want to focus on, and then it helps us identify the most critical or strategic interventions to implement.
Theory of Change to Results Framework

Move from the things we wish to achieve to the activities and actions needed to achieve them.
Theory of Change vs. Results Framework: Theory of Change

- **Broad:** Shows all domains and pathways that may reach a goal, including those the project/activity will not/cannot directly address.

- **Non-linear and adaptive.**

- **Describes conditions and rationales/reasons for linkages that lead to the problem, and along pathways of change towards our long-term goal.**

- **Used for understanding “the big picture.”**
Theory of Change vs Results Framework: Results Framework

- Specific: Based on specific pathway(s) of change that the project/activity has chosen, and the specific intervention(s) the project/activity will implement
- Linear and structured
- Illustrates outputs, outcomes, and impacts expected as a result of interventions, via the use of metrics and indicators
- Used for focused and specific project/activity monitoring, accountability, and reporting
Theory of Change vs Results Framework: Both

- Assumptions
- Long-term goal
Group Work – Part I

• Identify the key pathway(s) of change and how they are linked to the NUSTENAG activity outputs, outcomes and impacts

• Draw your Results Framework

You have 20 minutes.
FEED THE FUTURE GOAL
Sustainably Reduce Global Poverty & Hunger

INDICATORS:
Prevalence of poverty &
Prevalence of underweight & stunted children

OBJECTIVE
INCLUSIVE AGRICULTURE SECTOR GROWTH

- Improved agricultural productivity
- Expanded markets & trade
- Increased investment in agriculture & nutrition-related activities
- Increased employment opportunities in targeted value chains
- Increased resilience of vulnerable communities & households

OBJECTIVE
IMPROVED NUTRITIONAL STATUS (WOMEN AND CHILDREN)

- Improved access to diverse & quality foods
- Improved nutrition-related behaviors
- Improved use of maternal & child health & nutrition services
Think about a FTF activity

• What is your Theory of Change?
• What is the Results Framework?
• How does the activity Results Framework relate to the FTF Results Framework?
SUCCESS!