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Theory of Change

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Session Objectives:

By the end of the session, participants will be able to describe the purposes, elements and process for refining a Theory of Change (ToC).

What is a ToC?

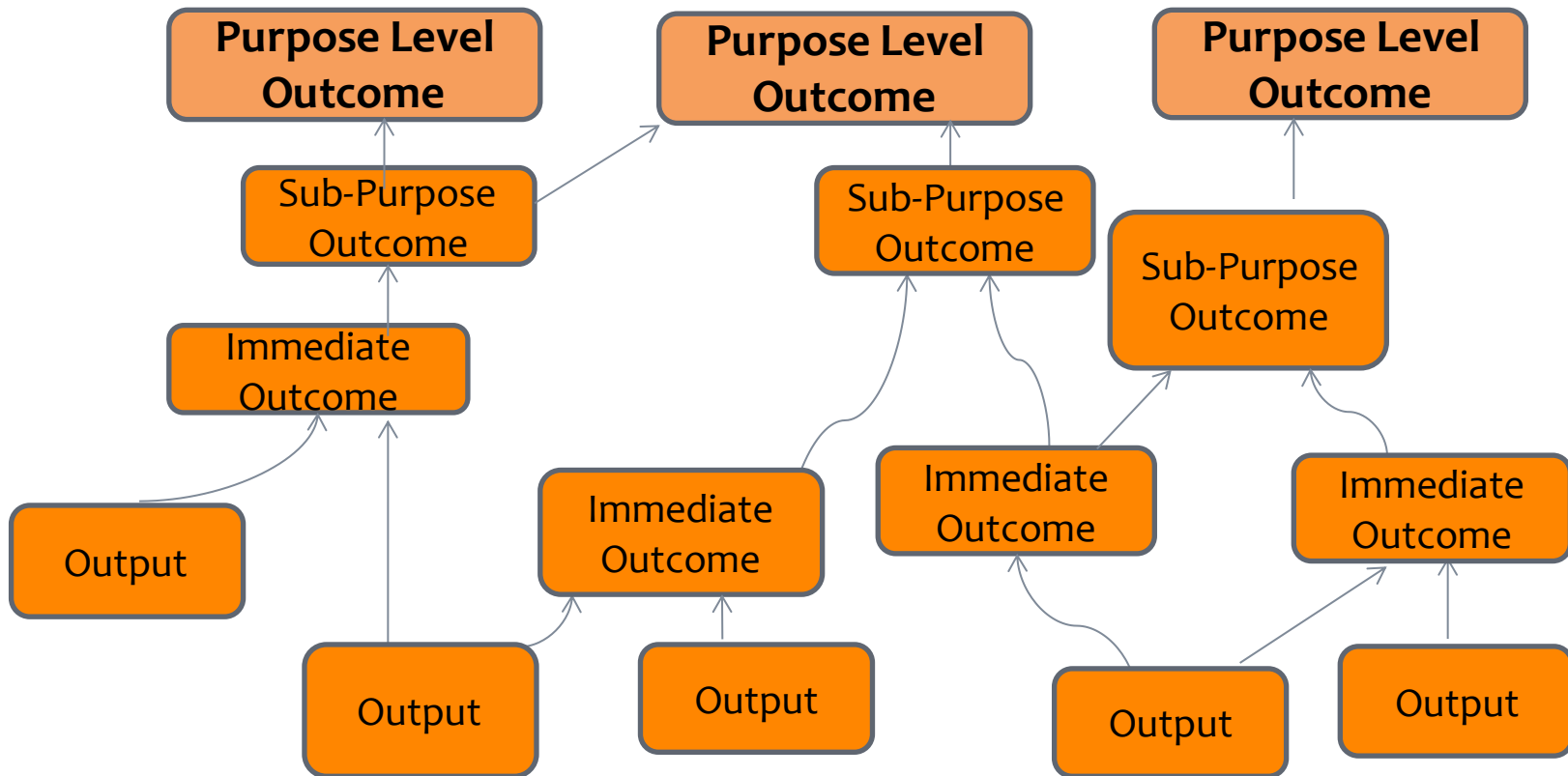
- A hypothesized series of changes that are expected to occur in a given context as the result of specific actions. The ToC makes explicit how a program/activity design team thinks outputs from their interventions will interact with other concurrent interventions and contextual conditions to stimulate or enable a series of outcomes that will ultimately lead to the achievement of desired objectives.

Why do we need it?

- To develop a causal pathway to identify necessary and sufficient outcomes needed to achieve a goal
- To develop a roadmap that shows how a set of actions would help achieve a goal
- To identify and highlight interventions and assumptions that are critical to produce an outcome
- To identify critical areas addressed by external actors and how the project will link to them

ToC Conceptual Model

Project Level Goal



Pathways of Change

Elements of a ToC: Diagrams

Project Level Goal Diagram

- Project Level Goal
- Pathways of change that include all outcomes down to the immediate outcome level
- Outcomes that are critical to achieve the goal but will be produced by other actors

Purpose Level Outcome Diagram

- Purpose Level Outcome
- Pathways of change that include all outcomes and outputs
- Outcomes that are critical to achieve the goal but will be produced by other actors
- Assumptions

ToC Elements: Project Level Goal

- The project level goal states the kind of lasting impact that will be achieved in the impact population group.
- The project level goal should be stated as a result and in terms of the desired change. Examples of common long-term goals in FFP development projects could be:
 - Reduced food insecurity in targeted areas
 - Improved household resilience in targeted areas

ToC Elements: Purpose Level Outcomes

- The main areas (relationships, behaviors, systems and institutions, laws and policies, etc.) where change must occur.
- Common areas for FFP development projects will generally focus around the pillars of food security: food availability, access and utilization.

ToC Elements: Outcomes

- An outcome is a state or condition that does not currently exist but must be in place for the project to achieve the long-term goal.
- Outcomes should be stated as a result and in terms of the desired change. As an example, an outcome related to food availability might be “improved agricultural production”.

ToC Elements: Pathways

- A pathway is the sequence in which outcomes must occur to reach your long-term goal.
- Pathways are depicted by vertical chains of outcomes connected to one another by arrows, proceeding from early outcomes at the bottom to longer-term outcomes at the top.

ToC Elements: Outputs

- Outputs are the tangible, immediate and intended products or consequences of the project's inputs.
- Outputs should be specific and directly contribute to the higher level outcome. For example, if the immediate outcome is “Increased Access to Irrigation”, an output could be “125 kilometers of improved irrigation canals constructed”.

ToC Elements: Assumptions

- *Assumptions* are conditions or resources that your group believes are needed for the success of your program, and which already exist and will not be problematic to maintain. The major types of assumptions are:
 - *Rationales*: Assumptions about why a precondition or set of preconditions is necessary and sufficient for movement from outcome to outcome.
 - Global assumptions: Preconditions for the entire ToC, such as contextual or environmental conditions out of the control of the actors but which must exist for the entire ToC to be relevant.

Developing/Refining a ToC Diagram

- Review the existing TOC Diagram & LogFrame
 - Are outcomes sequenced properly?
 - Does each lower level outcome lead to the higher level outcome?
 - Do the proposed interventions connect the outcomes?
 - Are there any large leaps in logic or missing elements?
 - Is each outcome necessary and sufficient to cause the higher level outcome?
 - Are all necessary outcomes that others are responsible included?
 - Do you have sufficient time and resources?

Refining the ToC Narrative

- The purposes of the narrative are:
 - Summarize the major elements of the ToC
 - Describe and provide evidence on how the problem analysis, assumptions, rationales relate to the long-term goal, outcomes (especially for non-project implementers), pathways and interventions.

ToC Resources

- USAID/FFP M&E Policy Handbook (expected release in January 2015)
- ActKnowledge ToC Technical Papers – Taplin, Clark, Collins and Colby; 2013
- TOPS ToC Workshop Materials – TANGO: Frankenberger & Downen; October 2014
- www.theoryofchange.org