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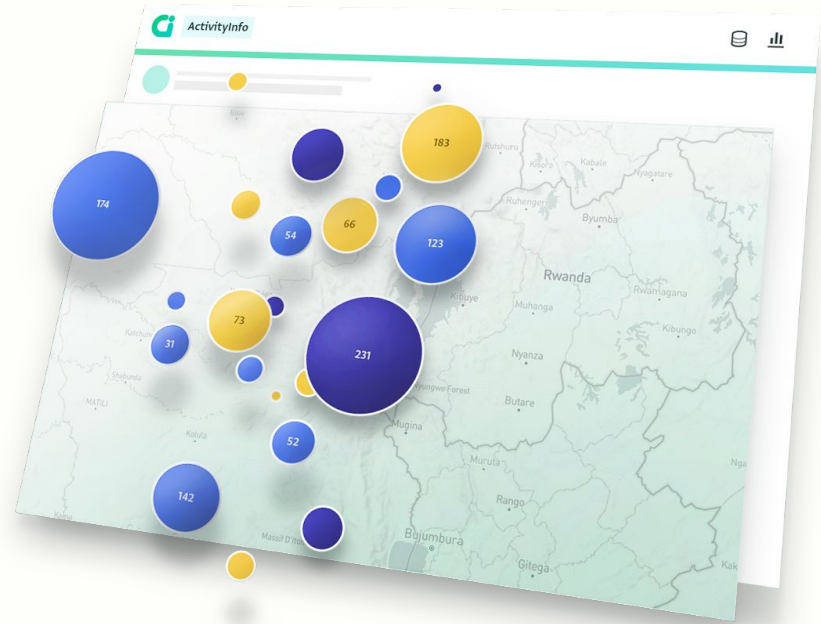
ActivityInfo

From Theory of Change to Database Design for
evidence-based decision making

Presented by the ActivityInfo Team

Software for Monitoring & Evaluation

- Track activities, outcomes
- Beneficiary management
- Surveys
- Work offline/online



Webinar series structure



Webinar series structure

Incentive for this webinar series:

- Raise awareness on how a solid MEAL system design enable evidence-based decision through systematic learning.
- Raise awareness on tools that compose the MEAL system.
- Explain how the systematic use of databases can enable evidence-based decision making.

Today's session outline

- What is a Theory of Change (ToC)?
 - Understand the definition
- Why do we need to develop a Theory of Change?
 - Understand how we can use the Theory of Change
- How to develop a Theory of Change?
 - The elements of Theory of change
 - Best practices for the Theory of change development
- QandAs

Theory of Change

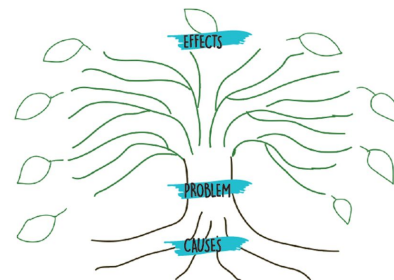
What is a Theory of Change

Definition

A Theory of Change is an ongoing 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

Source: *Theories of change: time for a radical approach to learning in development*
<https://odi.org/en/publications/theories-of-change-time-for-a-radical-approach-to-learning-in-development/>

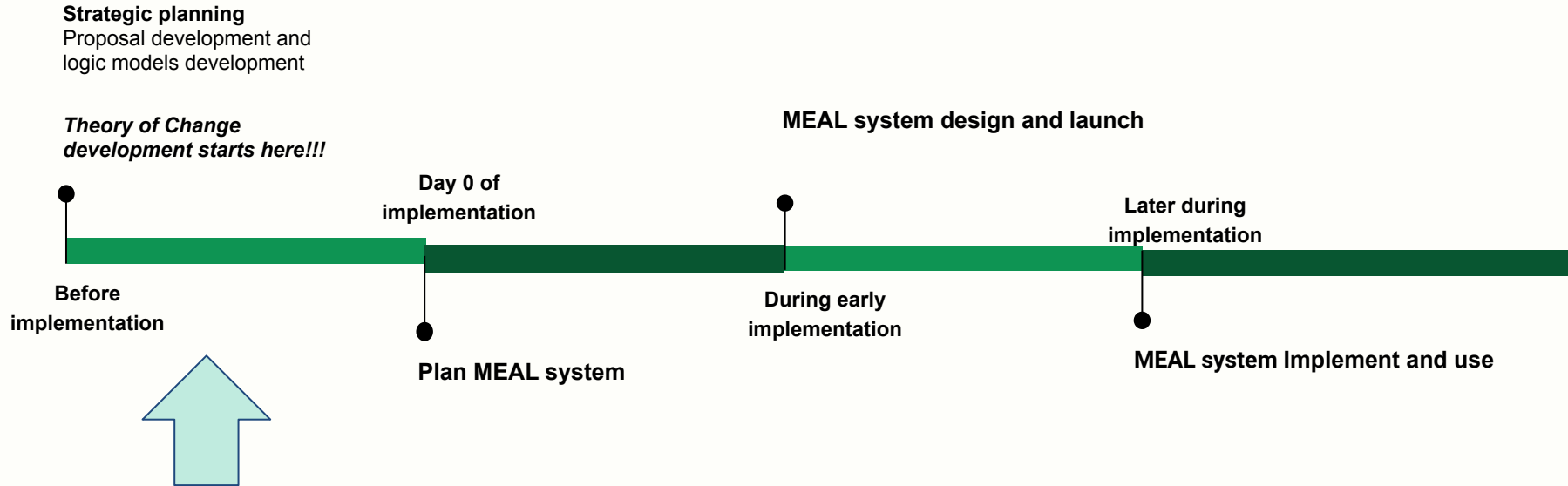
- The Theory of Change describes:
 - The **logical flow** between a key problem and its immediate and root causes
 - The **long-term change** it seeks to bring about in response to this key problem
 - What **needs to happen** in order for this change to come about



What is a Theory of Change

When do we develop the Theory of Change?

CASE STUDY



What is a Theory of Change

Case Study

Country: Homeland

Context: Homeland received suddenly an influx of refugees from a neighbouring country. There were thousands of refugees crossing the borders each day for the first two years. Currently, we are on the third year of this humanitarian crisis. The priorities have changed. Incoming refugees wish to build in their future in Homeland and NGOs in collaboration with the Government need to identify the **pathways** that lead to integration and through appropriate **interventions** to facilitate this pathway.

What: We are working as part of the MEAL team for the following month, we will support the MEAL system design to facilitate the programming teams operating on the ground.

Timing: The programming team is currently developing the proposal.

Why do we need a Theory of Change?

Theory of Change can be helpful in two related ways.

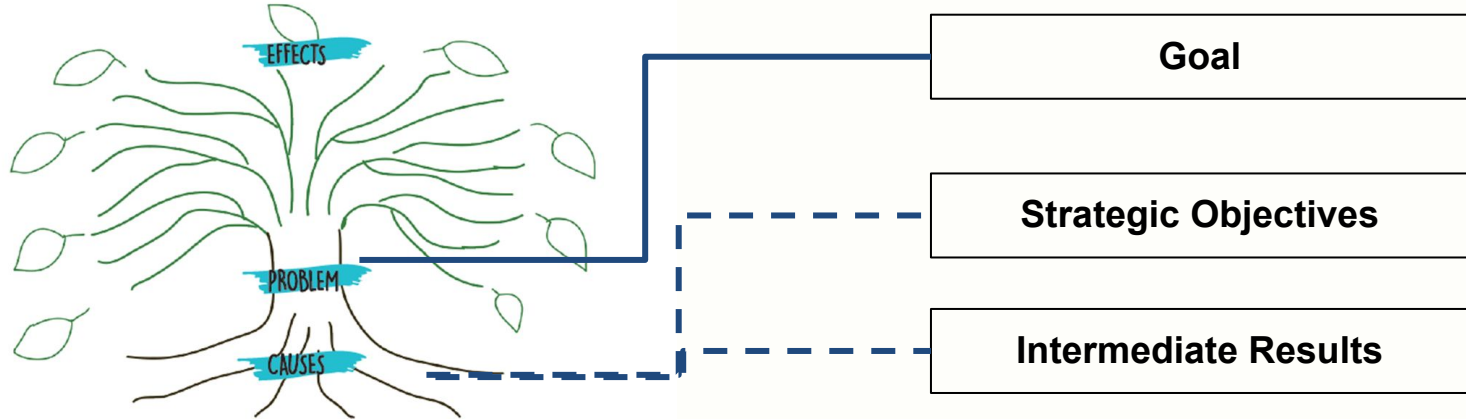
- ❖ **As a tool**, it can give practitioners the freedom to open up the black box of assumptions about change that are too often side-lined.
- ❖ There is often much practitioners do not know about the contexts they work in; Theories of Change force **them to make these knowledge gaps clear** and revisit them over time.

Why do we need a Theory of Change?

01

To articulate and justify project's logic

- Bridge the gap between the problem tree and the proposed response reflected in the Results Framework

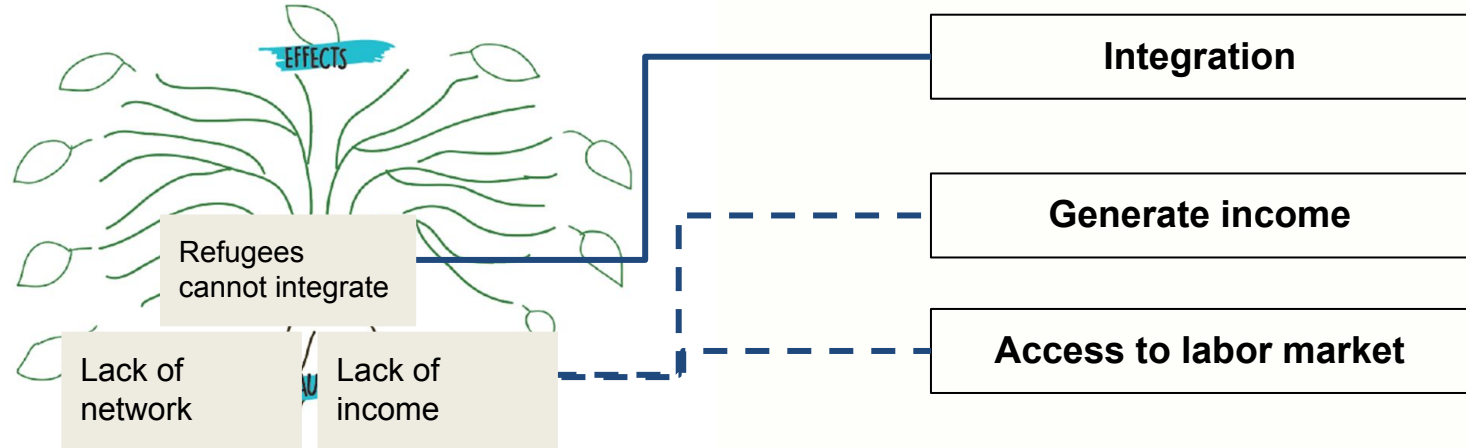


Why do we need a Theory of Change?

01

To articulate and justify project's logic

- Bridge the gap between the problem tree and the proposed response reflected in the Results Framework



Why do we need a Theory of Change?

02

To support project teams

- Supports project teams to focus the learning, thus facilitating timely project modifications

03

To facilitate learning

- The Theory of Change serves as the foundation learning and evaluation questions

Theory of change illustrates a hypothesis: If refugees access labor market and generate income (.....) then they will be integrated into (.....)

Why do we need a Theory of Change?

04

To facilitate communication

- Supports in the formulation of a comprehensive project description

- **Donor:** which are the project's goal and how you will achieve those?
- **Project Manager:** We are planning an intervention that (.....)



Why do we need a Theory of Change?

How we can operationalize?

Learning for What?

Learning for Whom?

What kind of learning?

How to develop a Theory of change

How to develop a Theory of Change

Theory of change elements

IF we do X **and** Y hold true, **then** we will achieve Z **because** a,b, and c

How to develop a Theory of Change

Theory of change elements

IF we do X **and** Y hold true, **then** we will achieve Z **because** a,b, and c

IFs are :

- **long-term change preconditions** that need to be addressed by the intervention
- **assumptions** that the intervention will not directly address that we acknowledge that are critical for the achievement of the long-term goal

Example of assumptions:

- Context factors
- Results by other actors

How we can identify the IFs:

- During the assessment where we conduct gap analysis to identify work of other actors, capacity analysis of actors, barrier analysis to assess barriers for the intervention.

How to develop a Theory of Change

Theory of change elements

IF we do X **and** Y hold true, **then** we will achieve Z **because** a,b, and c

Let's associate this with our case study.....

If we enable refugees to enter the local labor market and the government provides work permits based on refugee status (.....)

How to develop a Theory of Change

Theory of change elements

IF we do X **and** Y hold true, **then** we will achieve Z **because** a,b, and c

Then

- The long-term change
- The core problem in our problem tree

Because

- Provides the evidence for why the IF - Then hypothesis holds true.

How to develop a Theory of Change

Theory of change elements

IF we do X **and** Y hold true, **then** we will achieve Z **because** a,b, and c

Let's associate this with our case study.....

(.....) then refugees will be integrated because studies have shown that (.....)

How to develop a Theory of Change

Example

Let's associate this with our case study.....

If we enable refugees to enter the local labor market and generate income

And the government provides work permits based on refugee status

Then refugees will be integrated

Because studies have shown that accessing the labor market is an enabling factor of integration

How to develop a Theory of Change

Steps to develop a Theory of change

Identify problem tree

- **Use** the assessment data
- **Identify** core problem and causes

Pathways of change

- **Identify** how causes lead to core problem
- **Identify** assumptions that may affect on how the cause affects the core problem

Intervention decision

- **Decide** the intervention needed
- **Specify** which causes the intervention will address

Produce ToC

- **Produce** the Theory of Change
- **Transform** Theory of change into Results Framework

How to develop a Theory of Change

Best practices

- Problem trees can be **chaotic as reality is chaotic**. Be comfortable with this!
- **Use your assessment data** to identify the main causes and prioritize!
- Be participatory! include all the relevant stakeholders in the process to get a holistic understanding on the pathways of change
- It is not a linear process! you will need to go back and revise! treat **ToC as a living document!**
- Now is the time to start thinking the information that you need to confirm the ToC! **The indicators!**
- You can present the ToC with a **narrative or graphic way!**

How to develop a Theory of Change

Challenge!

Following this session, think one of your projects and write the Theory of Change for the specific project!

How to develop a Theory of Change

Resources

Practical Guidance on Developing a Project's Theory of Change

<https://www.crs.org/our-work-overseas/research-publications/practical-guidance-developing-projects-theory-change>

Theories of change: time for a radical approach to learning in development

<https://odi.org/en/publications/theories-of-change-time-for-a-radical-approach-to-learning-in-development/>

Time for Q&A!

Thank you!