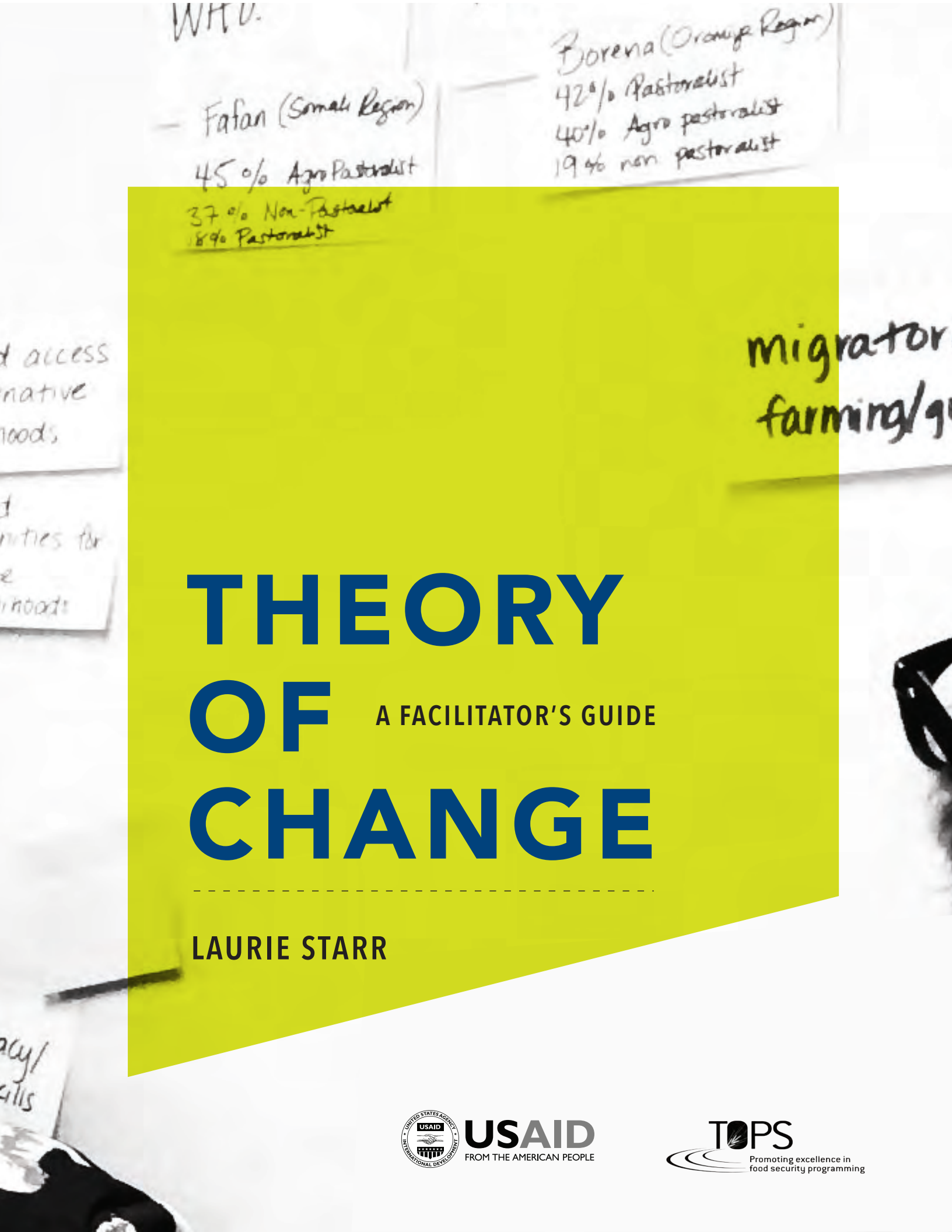

THEORY OF CHANGE

A FACILITATOR'S GUIDE

LAURIE STARR

USAID FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

TOPS Promoting excellence in food security programming

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The Technical and Operational Performance Support (TOPS) Program is the USAID/Food for Peace-funded learning mechanism that generates, captures, disseminates, and applies the highest quality information, knowledge, and promising practices in development food assistance programming, to ensure that more communities and households benefit from the U.S. Government's investment in fighting global hunger. Through technical capacity strengthening, documentation and innovation, and an in-person and online community of practice (the Food Security and Nutrition [FSN] Network), The TOPS Program empowers food security implementers and the donor community to make lasting impact for millions of the world's most vulnerable people.

The original TOPS Program started in 2010 and was a consortium of five partner organizations: Save the Children, CORE Group, Food for the Hungry, Mercy Corps and TANGO International. The original TOPS Program ended in January 2018 but was extended under a 'bridge award' through June 2019.

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Theory of Change: Facilitator's guide by L. Starr., and M. Fornoff. Washington, DC: TANGO International and The TOPS Program was initially released on the Food Security and Nutrition Network in 2014, with updated versions released in 2015 and 2016.

While the format of the 2019 version models earlier editions, the content has substantially changed to better align to USAID's Office of Food for Peace requirements. The TOPS Program recommends that applicants and awardees for FFP-funded activities no longer reference earlier versions, as some content is no longer accurate.

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CONTENTS

ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

CBO	community-based organization
CMAM	community-based management of acute malnutrition
DFSA	Development Food Security Activities
DRR	disaster risk reduction
FFP	USAID Office of Food for Peace
GMP	growth monitoring and promotion
IMCI	integrated management of childhood illness
M&E	monitoring and evaluation
NGO	nongovernmental organization
NRM	natural resource management
ORT	oral rehydration therapy
Q&A	question and answer session
TOC	theory of change

Acknowledgements

The TOPS Program would like to thank all participants in past and future theory of change workshops whose helpful suggestions and insights continue to refine and clarify how we present concepts in the Theory of Change Curriculum.

Additionally, TOPS thanks Food for Peace Monitoring and Evaluation staff Arif Rashid, Barbara Reed, Nancy Peek, Chung Lai, Mara Mordini, and Hilary Cook for numerous conversations and suggestions over the years that have helped to better align this curriculum to Food for Peace policy related to theories of change.

INTRODUCTION

Currently the international development community (practitioners and donors alike) shows great interest in using a theory of change (TOC) as the development hypothesis for programs and activities. The reasons for this shift are many. Compared to other processes, developing a TOC requires a more in-depth causal analysis of issues—an analysis that is rooted in a rigorous and evolving evidence base. Developing and using a TOC builds common understanding among stakeholders around the actions needed to achieve desired changes. Additionally, a TOC allows for efficient monitoring, learning, and evaluation based on a clear and testable set of hypotheses.

Diverse guidance exists on how to best design and use a TOC. In this curriculum (*Theory of Change: Facilitator's Guide* and the accompanying materials[1]), we present one method that does its best to align to the requirements of creating a development hypothesis for a Development Food Security Activity (DFSA) funded by USAID's Office of Food for Peace (FFP). Previous experience in program and TOC development, participant feedback from six years of TOPS workshops, and input from the FFP Monitoring and Evaluation Team all help to craft this curriculum. We update it each year to align to the most current FFP guidance for DFSA implementers and to share new methods for strengthening staff capacity in TOC development and use.

1 Accompanying materials include PowerPoints, handouts, tools, instructions for small group work, and a TOC checklist to ensure quality and completeness of TOC diagrams. All are available at www.fsnnetwork.org /theory-change-training-curriculum

Using This Guide

The target audience for this course is nongovernmental organization (NGO) staff involved in planning, implementing, monitoring, learning from, and adapting FFP-funded DFSAs. The course also can be helpful for any stakeholder in the public or private sector who has responsibilities or interests in holistic program design.

The main learning objective for the five-module course is to become familiar with a process that uses thorough causal analysis as the foundation for creating an evidence-based TOC for development programs.

Please note that we intend this 5-day course to be an introduction to the TOC process months prior to an actual program design workshop. It is not appropriate or feasible to complete all the outlined steps in a 5-day DFSA design workshop.

Each of the five modules can be completed in one 8-hour day, including two 15-minute breaks and an hour for lunch. The modules begin with an overview of the entire TOC process, progress through recommended steps necessary to develop a final product, and conclude with ideas about how to use a TOC throughout the program cycle. Every session has a suggested duration, which you may adapt to time available and participants' level of understanding.

As with the agenda, feel free to adapt any part of this training to fit your needs. If you have your own examples of problem trees or TOC diagrams, or your organization has preferred matrices for organizing information, please incorporate them into the training. If you elect to have participants carry out fieldwork to collect sample data or devote time to background reading, this can only enhance the learning experience.

Facilitation ideas and tips that may help you explain concepts or guide groups through an activity are in blue-highlighted text boxes like the one below.

FACILITATOR

Try to have a facilitator for each small group. Participants often have many questions specific to their group's work, and having a dedicated guide along the way is useful.

BACKGROUND READING

We strongly advise that the facilitator of this workshop be well-versed in TOC development and program design. For additional background reading, we recommend the following resources:

Anderson, A. 2005. The community builder's approach to theory of change: A practical guide to theory development. New York, NY: The Aspen Institute.

Taplin, D., H. Clark. 2012. Theory of change basics: A primer on theory of change. New York, NY: ActKnowledge.

Center for Theory of Change. Available at: www.theoryofchange.org

USAID'S Office of Food for Peace. 2016. Policy and Guidance for Monitoring, Evaluation, and Reporting for Development Food Security Activities. Washington, DC: USAID. Recommended excerpt: Chapter 2, Section 2.1.

USAID Bureau of Democracy, Conflict, and Humanitarian Assistance Office of Food for Peace. 2016. Technical Reference for FFP Development Food Assistance Projects. Washington, DC: USAID. Recommended excerpt: Chapter II Mandatory Program Design Elements, pages 4-17.

Vogel, I. 2012. Review of the use of 'Theory of Change' in international development: Review report. London, UK: UK Department of International Development.

WE WOULD LIKE YOUR FEEDBACK

We are continually adapting and improving the Facilitators' Guide and all accompanying materials curriculum as we learn more, find better ways of instructing, consult experts, and gain feedback from workshop participants.

Please send your suggestions to lstarr@savechildren.org.

List of Key Terms

Below is a list of key terms used throughout the Theory of Change modules.[2]

Assumption: Contextual or environmental conditions that are important to the success of a theory of change, but are beyond a project's control. Assumptions are conditions that already exist or have a relatively high likelihood of occurring.

Breakthrough: An outcome that represents a significant leap forward in a TOC pathway that is not easily reversed.

Causal analysis: The process of identifying why various problems exist by developing hierarchical relationship between causes and effects, exploring cross-causal linkages, and identifying feedback loops.

Domains of change: The broad conditions that must be met to achieve a long-term goal – also referred to as key leverage points or strategic objectives. In 2014, FFP began using the term **"purpose"** to describe this concept.

Outcomes: changes that are expected to occur when all necessary and sufficient preconditions are met. Lower-level outcomes are preconditions for higher-level outcomes. An outcome is not an action, but rather a state of being.

Outputs: The immediate product of project interventions. Outputs are preconditions for lower-level outcomes.

Pathway of change/ TOC pathway: A graphic representation of all incremental outcomes, and the sequence in which they occur, that are required within a domain of change.

Preconditions: The set of outputs and outcomes necessary to achieve an over-arching goal. An output may be the precondition for a lower-level outcome. A lower-level outcome is a precondition of a higher-level outcome. A higher-level outcome is a precondition for a domain of change or FFP Purpose.

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2 Many definitions and different terms exist for the concepts described. Please review the terms and definitions used in this course, noting alignment to any terms preferred by your organization. If your organization prefers and consistently uses another term (for example, impact pathway instead of pathway of change), please feel free to adapt the materials throughout.

Problem tree:
The graphic product that is created through the process of causal analysis.

Problem(s)/cause(s): A condition or set of conditions that negatively affect people and contribute to compromised outcomes. Problems can be and typically are both causes and effects of other conditions. In this course, we distinguish various types and levels of problems/causes, as follows:

> **Overarching problem:** The most significant problem facing a defined population, based on evidence.
>
> **Key problems:** The broad conditions that contribute to an overarching problem.
>
> **Underlying (root) cause:** Significant and specific contributors to key problems, which are often the effects of other causes, for example, behaviors, beliefs, knowledge or skill levels, or systemic weaknesses.
>
> **Contextual conditions:** Social, economic, political, or natural conditions that contribute to underlying causes and may be the result of key problems (i.e., the cycle of vulnerability).

Resilience: A set of capacities that enable households and communities to effectively function in the face of shocks and stressors and still meet a set of well-being outcomes.

Risk: Conditions, both beyond the control of a project and those resulting from project interventions, that may negatively affect a project's progress but that have a relatively low likelihood of occurring.

List of Items Needed

- Participants should bring:
- Laptop computers
- Pens/pencils
- An open mind and willingness to learn

The facilitator/host/venue should provide:[3]

- Information prior to meeting (e.g., list of things to bring, agenda, meals provided)
- Name tags for participants
- One projector for facilitators with a laser pointer/remote slide advancer
- At least two microphones
- Tables arranged to accommodate groups of up to six participants
- Power strips (and electrical outlet) for computers at each table
- Small projectors for group work (one per group); no need for screens if walls in the venue can be used instead
- Flip charts and markers (two flip charts per group table, two in back of room); post-it flip chart paper can reduce the number of pads you actually need
- Highlighters (one per participant)
- Three pads of large sticky notes (with color variety) for each table
- Two medium-tipped black markers per table (it is difficult to get sufficient detail on the sticky notes with fat-tipped markers)
- Several colored markers per table
- Printed handouts for each day
- Printed datasets (minimum of one per every two participants); if possible, send these to participants 1–2 weeks prior to the workshop so they have time to review
- Printed evaluation forms for each day
- USB drive with all training materials

3 Not every workshop will need all listed items. It will depend on the agenda, the meeting space, the number of participants, etc.

Sample Agenda for the 5-Day Training

Feel free to adjust the sample agenda on page 8 as needed; however, please consider the following:

- Hands-on activities are the foundation of the workshop and groups need sufficient time to complete them. The time allotted for group work in the agenda may appear very long at first glance, but experience shows that most of the activities require much discussion, critical thinking, and revision. Try not to cut corners here.
- The material is dense, so ensure breaks are sufficient in number and duration. At minimum, schedule one 15-minute break in the morning and one in the afternoon.
- Factor in adequate time for discussion and questions during small group presentations, gallery walks, and plenary. Much of the learning takes place as groups compare their experiences with the process. On the flip side, strong time management skills are needed (e.g., the ability to cut off good discussion by engaged participants so the process can move forward).
- Schedule 5 minutes once or twice a day for an energizer activity.

PLENARY: THEORY OF CHANGE Q&A

In the middle of each day, we recommend that the facilitator provide participants with an opportunity for a brief and casual question-and-answer (Q&A) session on the TOC process.

Some example questions may include:

- How is everyone's experience with the process so far? Is it "clicking?" What is still confusing?
- Are there any concerns with the process up to this point?
- At this point, do you feel you could replicate the process with your own dataset?

Sample Theory of Change Workshop Agenda

[LOCATION]

[DATES]

Facilitators: [NAME(S) AND ORGANIZATION(S)]

[Date and Day]

Day 1 – Theory of Change (TOC) Overview, Conceptual Frameworks

Time	Topic	Handouts and Tools
8:30–9:00 a.m.	**Registration and coffee**	
9:00–9:20 a.m.	• Welcome and participant introductions • General overview and structure of workshop	Agenda
9:20–9:50 a.m.	**Presentation 1.1: Overview of Theory of Change** Session objectives: • To provide a general overview of the TOC process and the resulting product. • To briefly review the different materials used in this workshop: printed handouts, tools on USB, PowerPoints on USB.	
9:50–10:00 a.m.	**Plenary: questions, answers, participant expectations for workshop**	
10:00–10:30 a.m.	**Presentation 1.2: Using a conceptual framework to inform data collection and analysis** Session objectives: • To demonstrate how to use a conceptual framework as a tool for informing TOC development. • To share tools that can help practitioners organize and interpret data.	• Handout 1.2a Resilience framework • Handout 1.2b FFP Conceptual Framework for Food Security • Handout 1.2c Key questions • Sample datasets
10:30-10:45 a.m.	**Small Group Activity 1.2** • Introduce raw datasets that provide content for all analysis carried out in this workshop. • Introduce key questions for analysis.	On USB: • Tool 1.2a data synthesis • Tool 1.2b trend analysis • Tool 1.2c asset inventory • Tool 1.2d opps & constraints • Tool 1.2e stakeholder mapping template
10:45–11:00 a.m.	**Break**	
11:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.	**Small Group Activity 1.2** • Groups begin to review and analyze data to answer key questions. • Groups document data gaps.	• Instructions for Activity 1.2
12:00–1:00 p.m.	**Lunch**	
1:00–1:15 p.m.	**Plenary: Q&A about process**	
1:15–2:00 p.m.	**Small Group Activity 1.2 (continued)** • Continue to review and analyze raw data to answer key questions.	
3:00–3:15 p.m.	**Break**	
3:15–4:00 p.m.	**Small Group Activity 1.2 (continued)** • Prepare to share preliminary analysis in plenary.	
4:00–4:45 p.m.	**Plenary Discussion** • Two groups present preliminary analysis (10 minute presentation; 10 minutes for ques-tions and discussion)	
4:45–5:00 p.m.	**Wrap up/feedback/daily evaluation**	

[Date and Day]

Day 2 – Making the TOC Plausible: Causal Analysis and Problem Trees

Time	Topic	Handouts and Tools
9:00–9:15 a.m.	**Brief plenary** • Participant questions, answers, observations about Day 1 process. • Overview of Day 2.	
9:15–9:40 a.m.	**Presentation 2.1: Causal Analysis and Problem Trees** Session objectives: • To explain the concept of causal analysis and how it is used to create a problem tree. • To practice identifying strong and weak causal linkages.	• Handout 2.1a problem tree • Handout 2.1b causal stream examples • Handout 2.1c 2-page problem tree On USB: • Tool 2.1a causal matrix
9:40–10:15 a.m.	**Plenary discussion: Critique sample problem trees on a large screen**	
10:15–10:30 a.m.	**Break**	
10:30 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.	**Small Group Activity 2.1** • Draft concise problem statements for all problem levels • Begin causal analysis noting data gaps.	• Instructions for Activity 2.1 • Handout 2.1 Sample data synthesis
12:00–1:00 p.m.	**Lunch**	
1:00–1:15 p.m.	**Plenary: Q&A about process**	
1:15–3:00 p.m.	**Small Group Activity 2.1 (continued)** • Continue to check logic. • Check the balance between systemic, knowledge-related, and behavioral constraints. • Complete problem tree and begin to capture it in an electronic format.	
3:00–3:15 p.m.	**Break**	
3:15–3:45 p.m.	**Plenary: Gallery walk of problem trees; critical peer review and feedback**	
3:45–4:45 p.m.	**Small Group Activity 2.1 (continued)** • Refine problem tree based on feedback. • Capture changes in electronic format.	
4:45–5:00 p.m.	**Wrap-up/feedback/daily evaluation**	

[Date and Day]

Day 3 – Making the TOC Plausible: From Problems to Solutions

Time	Topic	Handouts and Tools
9:00–9:15 a.m.	**Brief plenary** • Participant questions, answers, observations about Day 2 process. • Overview of Day 3.	
9:15–9:45 a.m.	**Presentation 3.1: From Problems to Solutions** Session objectives: • To illustrate the transition from problem trees to solution trees • To demonstrate how to link pathways across diagram pages • To describe the importance of refining pathways to include only essential outcomes.	
9:45–10:30 a.m.	**Small Group Activity 3.1** • Create solution trees by "flipping" problems into measurable results statements • Identify TOC pathways, including non-linear linkages	• Instructions for Activity 3.1
10:30–10:45a.m.	**Break**	
10:45 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.	**Small Group Activity 3.1 (continued)** • Check logic for all incremental steps in TOC pathways. • Check the balance between systemic, knowledge-related, and behavioral changes. • Continue to document evidence gaps • Distill all pathways to essential outcomes.	• Instructions for Activity 2.1 • Handout 2.1 Sample data synthesis
12:00–1:00 p.m.	**Lunch**	
1:00–1:15 p.m.	**Plenary: Q&A about process**	
1:15–2:15 p.m.	**Small Group Activity 3.1 (continued)** • Identify breakthroughs. • Continue to distill all pathways to essential outcomes.	
2:15–3:00 p.m.	**Presentation 3.2: Assumptions and Rationales** Session objectives: • To demonstrate how assumptions and rationales help to explain the plausibility of causal linkages. • To demonstrate how to insert assumptions and rationales in the TOC diagram. • To introduce the Complementary Documentation matrices as a tool for documenting the evidence that supports assumptions and rationales	On USB: Tool: Complementary Documentation Matrices
3:00–3:15 p.m.	**Break**	
3:15–4:45 p.m.	**Small Group Activity 3.2 (continued)** • Identify assumptions and insert into TOC diagram. • Note the evidence base that supports assumptions in the TOC Complementary Documentation. • Articulate rationales and insert into TOC diagram. • Provide notes and references for rationales the TOC Complementary Documentation	• Instructions for Activity 3.2
4:45–5:00 p.m.	**Wrap-up/feedback/daily evaluation**	

[Date and Day]
Day 4 – Making the TOC Feasible

Time	Topic	Handouts and Tools
9:00–9:15 a.m.	**Brief plenary** • Participant questions, answers, observations about Day 3 process. • Overview of Day 4.	
9:15–9:30 a.m.	**Presentation 4.1: Prioritize outcomes the project will address** Session objectives: • To share sample selection criteria for prioritizing the domains of change and specific outcomes that a project will address. • To demonstrate how to document outcome responsibilities of external actors in the TOC diagram.	
9:30–10:30 a.m.	**Small Group Activity 4.1** • Select the outcomes that the project will address and provide the rationale for selection. • Change the shape/color of outcomes that external actors will address • Discuss implications for project achievement if external actors do not make progress on an outcome as anticipated.	• Instructions for Activity 4.1 Tool- Complementary Documentation Matrices
10:30–10:45a.m.	**Break**	
10:45 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.	**Small Group Activity 4.1 (continued)** • Finalize TOC diagram highlighting what the project will and will not address.	
12:00–1:00 p.m.	**Lunch**	
1:00–1:15 p.m.	**Plenary: Q&A about process**	
1:15–2:00 p.m.	**Plenary discussion:** Two groups describe the process they used to prioritize outcomes their project will address, including: • A description of challenges that surfaced and how they dealt with them • A brainstorm about challenges and solutions related to tracking progress for outcomes that the project will not directly address. **Gallery walk:** All groups share TOC diagrams, showing the distinction between outcomes that the project and external actors will produce.	
2:00–2:20 p.m.	**Presentation 4.2: Selecting Interventions** Session objectives: • To explain how to identify "entry points" for intervention. • To highlight that proposed interventions must have a clear and logical link to at least one outcome in the TOC diagram. • To discuss criteria for selecting interventions. • To explore assumptions, risks, rationales, and key questions related to interventions • To demonstrate how to insert intervention outputs in the TOC diagram.	• Handout 4.2a Critical questions for interventions

2:20-3:00 p.m.	**Small Group Activity 4.2** • Begin to identify interventions for "entry-point outcomes" • List assumptions and risks related to each intervention.	• Instructions for Activity 4.2 On USB: Tool 4.2 Outcomes Intervention template
3:00-3:15 p.m.	**Break**	
3:15–3:45 p.m.	**Small Group Activity 4.2 (continued)** • Continue to identify interventions for "entry-point outcomes," • Identify necessary rationales between output and outcome links.	
3:45–4:00 p.m.	**Presentation: 4.3 Refine the TOC** Session objective: • To offer tips on making a TOC diagram more legible.	
4:00–4:45 p.m.	**Small Group Activity 4.3** • Improve readability of TOC diagram. • Develop a key for all color and shape coding.	• Instructions for Activity 4.3
4:45–5:00 p.m.	**Wrap-up/feedback/daily evaluation**	

[Date and Day]
Day 5 – Making the TOC Testable: Using the Theory of Change

Time	Topic	Handouts and Tools
9:00–9:15 a.m.	**Brief plenary** • Participant questions, answers, observations about Day 4 process. • Overview of Day 5.	
9:15–9:45 a.m.	**Presentation and Plenary Discussion: 5.1 Logframe transfer and indicators** Session objectives: • To explain how to transfer a TOC to an M&E logframe • To share criteria that will help to identify effective indicators for each incremental outcome	• Handout 5.1a_FFP Indica-tors On USB: • Handout 5.1d USAID FFP baseline final indicators • Handout 5.1e USAID FFP annual monitor-ing indicators
9:45–10:30 a.m.	**Small Group Activity 5.1** • Number outcomes in TOC using logframe format • Transfer TOC to logframe • Map FFP required indicators to TOC	• Instructions for Activity 5.1 On USB: • Tool 5.1 Logframe
10:30–10:45a.m.	**Break**	
10:45 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.	**Small Group Activity 5.1 (continued)** • Identify outcomes needing additional indicators • Craft indicators as needed	• Instructions for Activity 5.1
12:00–1:00 p.m.	**Lunch**	
1:00–1:15 p.m.	**Plenary: Q&A about process**	
1:15–1:45 p.m.	**Plenary discussion:** Two groups present complete TOC and logframe	
1:45–2:00 p.m.	**Presentation 5.2: Complementary Documentation**	• Complementary documentation matrices
2:00–2:30 p.m.	**Presentation 5.3: Using Theory of Change:** Session objective: • To explore how the TOC will be used at various stages in the program cycle	
2:30–3:00 p.m.	**Plenary discussion: Using a TOC**	
3:00–3:30 p.m.	**Final discussion and workshop evaluation**	

Note to Facilitators

Although we present three options below to allow for flexibility with available time, we highly recommend devoting five or more days to the curriculum, rather than fewer days. A 5-day workshop barely offers enough time to understand how to execute the TOC design process and learn how to use the final product throughout the program cycle; fewer than 5 days will compromise the learning-by-doing pedagogy embodied in the TOC training, which workshop participants emphatically assert helps to comprehend the TOC process.

If available time does not allow for the full 5-day curriculum, shorter trainings are still likely to engender significant discussion from workshop participants. You will have to decide which sessions to drop. Suggestions based on experience are in the table below.

Breakdown of Training Modules per Number of Available Training Days

If you have...		
1 day or less	**3 days**	**5 days or more**
Add depth to the overview (Presentation 1.1), drawing detail from subsequent sessions. Incorporate group discussion, expert Q&A, and evaluation of existing TOCs as time allows.	This is a challenging time frame because you must balance going into detail with collapsing the training into a shorter time span. **Day1: Sessions 1.1-2.1** Skip Group Activity 1.2. Instead, provide participants with a preliminary problem analysis from which they can construct a problem tree (Activity 2.1). Refining causal analysis skills is the most highly valued aspect of past trainings, so devote 4–5 hours to this task. **Day 2: Sessions 3.1-4.1.** In Session 3.1, provide participants with pre-made, logic-checked problem trees that they can convert to a TOC. Present Session 3.2, but skip the group activity. Carry out Session 4.1 in full. **Day 3: Sessions 4.2-5.3.** Present Sessions 4.2 and 4.3, but skip the group activities. Carry out Session 5.3 in full.	Proceed through the complete curriculum. If you have more than 5 days, expand group work time, especially during Activity 2.1 & 3.1, and add more discussion or Q&A time.

MODULE 1: OVERVIEW AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORKS

About Module 1

OVERVIEW

The purpose of Module 1 is to provide a basic overview of theories of change and to give participants hands-on practice in using a conceptual framework as a tool for planning data collection, and as an analytical tool to organize collected data.

FACILITATOR

The modules in this training use a resilience framework and the FFP Strategic Results Framework as the conceptual frameworks to guide problem analysis. However, any holistic conceptual framework (e.g., FFP conceptual framework for food security, sustainable livelihoods framework etc.) can be applied to these activities.

The objectives of Module 1 are:

- To provide a general overview of the theory of change (TOC) process and the resulting product.
- To demonstrate how to use a conceptual framework as a tool for informing TOC development and project design.
- To share tools that can help practitioners organize and interpret data.
- To introduce raw datasets that will provide the foundation for the remainder of the workshop.

STRUCTURE AND WORKLOAD

Module 1 is composed of:

- Facilitator-led presentations on two topics:
    - 1.1: Overview of theory of change.
    - 1.2: Using a conceptual framework to inform data collection and analysis.
- 3 hours of hands-on preliminary data organization and interpretation using excerpts from actual quantitative and qualitative datasets.
- Q&A with facilitators at various critical check-in points.
- A few group presentations in plenary at end of day.

Module 1 Session 1: Overview of Theory of Change

Estimated duration: 30 minutes

INTRODUCTION

This session introduces the basic concepts and processes involved in developing a TOC: the what, how, and why. It gives participants a quick synopsis of the entire process that we demonstrate and apply during the five workshop modules.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Session 1.1 will help participants:

- Gain a general understanding of the process we will use in this workshop to create a TOC diagram.
- Begin thinking critically about how a TOC can be used to more effectively design, implement, monitor, adapt, and evaluate development efforts.

COMPANION POWERPOINT

A PowerPoint presentation—1.1 Overview of Theory of Change—accompanies this lesson as a separate file.[4]

SLIDES

SLIDES 2-3

What is a Theory of Change?

A TOC is a hypothesized series of changes that are expected to occur in a given context as the result of specific integrated actions.

TOC development includes both a process and a product:

- The **process** involves thinking about a problematic situation, recognizing the underlying causes of the situation, identifying the long-term change we want to see in order to improve the situation, and working through the steps to determine how we will achieve that change. The process includes regularly revisiting the TOC throughout the program cycle with continual reflection on whether, how, and why change is occurring as we hypothesized.

4 Access the most current PowerPoint slides and handouts at www.fsnnetwork.org/theory-change-training-curriculum

- The **product** is the diagram produced from this process, the set of indicators that tell us how to recognize success at each step in the TOC pathways, and the Complementary Documentation[5] that communicates information not easily interpreted from the TOC diagram.

SLIDE 4

Why do we need a Theory of Change?

FACILITATOR

This slide includes animation. Before displaying the text of the slide, ask participants, "Why do we need a Theory of Change?" The slide contains several possible uses for the TOC.

A TOC provides benefits at multiple levels and has many potential uses. For example, by providing a detailed map showing pathways of change (or simply pathways) that are based on testable hypotheses it helps build common understanding and consensus of the steps needed to achieve desired change. TOCs for FFP DFSAs explicitly state how intervention outputs will set change in motion to achieve desired outcomes. Additionally, a TOC identifies critical outcomes that external actors will address and describes how the project will link to those efforts.

FACILITATOR

SLIDES 5–23

The Theory of Change Process

This set of slides outlines each step of the TOC process that participants will follow during the course of this workshop. **Stress to participants the need to revisit steps as they gain more information.**

Highlighting how the workshop agenda aligns to the various steps in the TOC process can help participants understand what they are in store for over the next 5 days.

SLIDE 6

The TOC Process

We use this list of steps as a road map throughout the training to remind participants of where they are in the process. Shaded text indicates a step in the process for which there is not sufficient time in a 5-day workshop to demonstrate.

5 As of May 2019, FFP still refers to the Complementary Documentation as the "TOC Narrative", but terminology is expected to change very soon.

SLIDES 7–9

Comprehensive Data Collection and Analysis

A strong evidence-based problem analysis sets the TOC process apart from other processes. Comprehensive data collection and analysis allows you to identify context-specific problems, rather than simply relying on a generic analysis of the problems of the poor. Module 1 Session 2 describes this in detail.

Conceptual frameworks are useful as organizing devices to plan data collection and guide data analysis. They help to ensure we collect the right kind of information—information that allows us to carry out a rigorous and thorough causal analysis. They help us to identify evidence gaps, or in other words, to understand what we know and what we do not yet know. Ongoing data collection and analysis helps us fill those data gaps so that we can more accurately determine the causal links between problems.

A key component of comprehensive analysis for any project design is stakeholders' mapping and analysis. This exercise becomes even more important in the TOC process as theories of change are not limited to the work of one organization or consortium. Stakeholder mapping and analyses should be ongoing through the life of the project to understand shifts in the relative efforts and influences of various stakeholders.

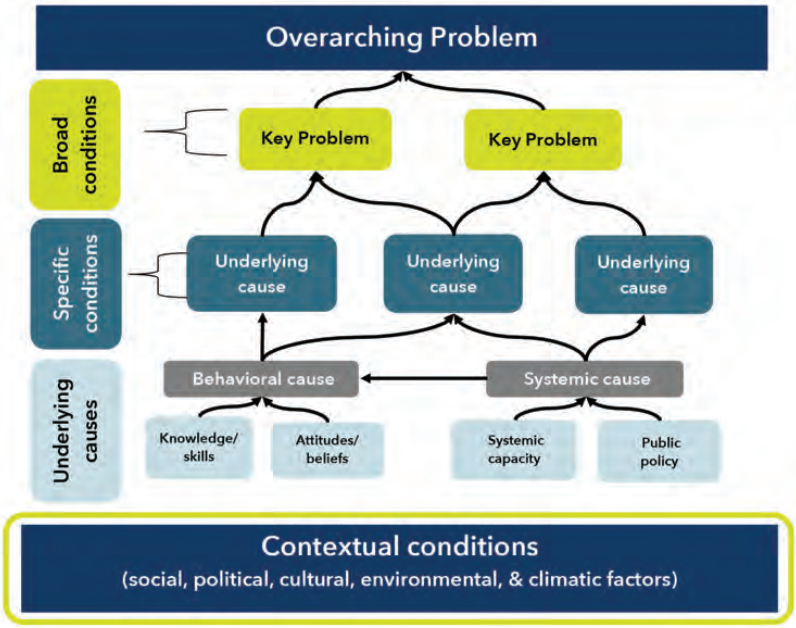
SLIDES 10-12

Causal Analysis and Problem Trees

The process of mapping causal streams allows us to construct a problem tree—a diagram that shows how problematic conditions are linked. You will start by identifying the main causes of an overarching problem based on the data analysis, and repeat this process moving "downstream', continuously asking "and what are the main causes of this problem" until you have identified many streams of underlying causes. In the TOC process, we do not limit ourselves to problems that we perceive to be within the scope of our proposed project. It is important to list all types of problems and to track all evidence gaps as they surface.

Slides 10 & 11 highlight four levels of problems:

- **Overarching problem:** The most significant problem facing a defined population.
- **Key problems:** Broad conditions that affect people in a negative way.
- **Underlying/root causes:** Major causes of key problems that are often the effects of other causes.



- **Contextual conditions:** General social, political, cultural, environmental and climatic conditions that contribute to underlying causes and, at times, via a feedback loop, result from the key problems.

The key problems will form the top of the problem tree, the underlying/root causes form the middle of the tree, and contextual conditions will generally feed in from the bottom.

FACILITATOR

Before clicking forward on Slide 11, ask participants to identify each level of problem.

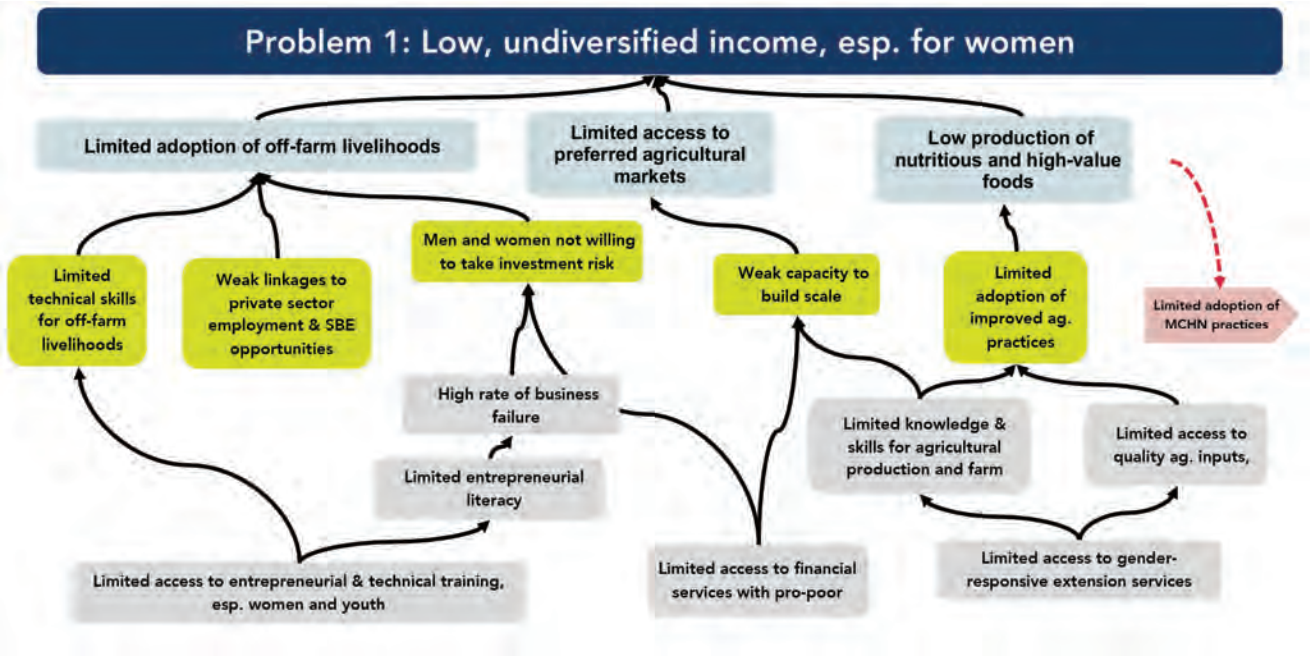
Slide 12 provides more detail on underlying/root causes. Underlying causes come in myriad forms: practices and behaviors; knowledge, skill levels, beliefs, and attitudes, all of which influence practices and behavior; and systemic conditions. It is critical to consider all forms during causal analysis.

SLIDE 13

Sample Excerpt from a Problem Tree

Determining the causal linkages between problems allows us to organize these conditions into a problem tree and begin to see a cause-and-effect flow, including cross-causal linkages. This is a crucial preliminary step for identifying domains of change and TOC pathways.

Module 2 Session 1 provides more detail on problem trees and causal analysis.

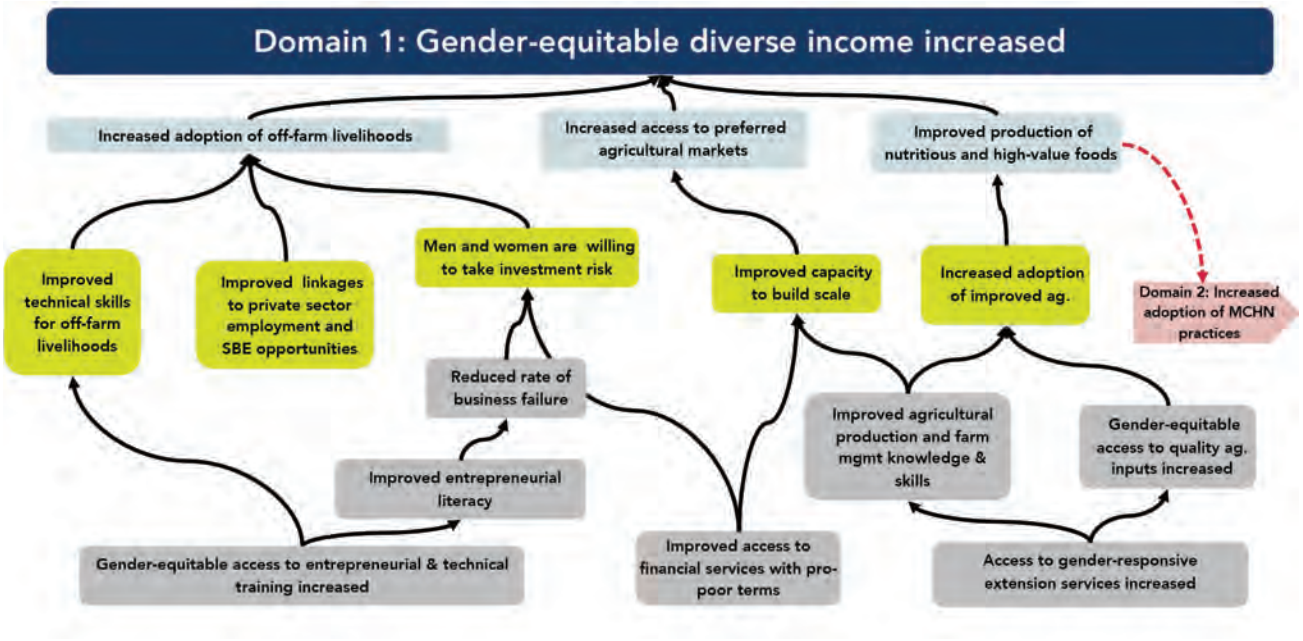


SLIDES 14–15

Solution Tree

The next step is to restate all problem statements in terms of desired change or solutions. We want to make sure we phrase the solutions as if they are already achieved (e.g., Populations in X District are Food Secure…), rather than in the future tense (e.g., Household food security will increase).

Key problems transform or "flip" into domains of change– the main areas where changes must occur if your project is to achieve the overarching goal. Some or all of the domains will become FFP Purposes. This is explained later. A common mistake at this point in the process is to flip only the problems that your organization believes it can address. It is very important to flip



every single problem in the problem tree into a solution. We want to keep a comprehensive lens on all solutions that are necessary to achieve the stated goal, whether or not our project intends to address them.

Module 3 Session 1 describes how to convert a problem tree to a solution tree in more detail.

SLIDE 16

TOC Pathways

We map TOC pathways by starting with a domain of change and tracing, by way of the arrows, all the incremental solutions that lead to it. FFP uses the term outcomes to refer to these step-by-step solutions. Other organizations may use terms such as results or accomplishments to mean the same thing. A pathway is the sequence in which outcomes are expected to occur in order to achieve the domain of change, and ultimately reach the goal. Mapping pathways helps us understand why outcomes on lower levels are **preconditions** for outcomes at the next higher level.

Mapping pathways often results in identifying linkages across domains (depicted in the pink arrow shape in the diagram above). These cross-sectoral linkages are a key strength of TOCs compared to results frameworks or other linear logistical frameworks.

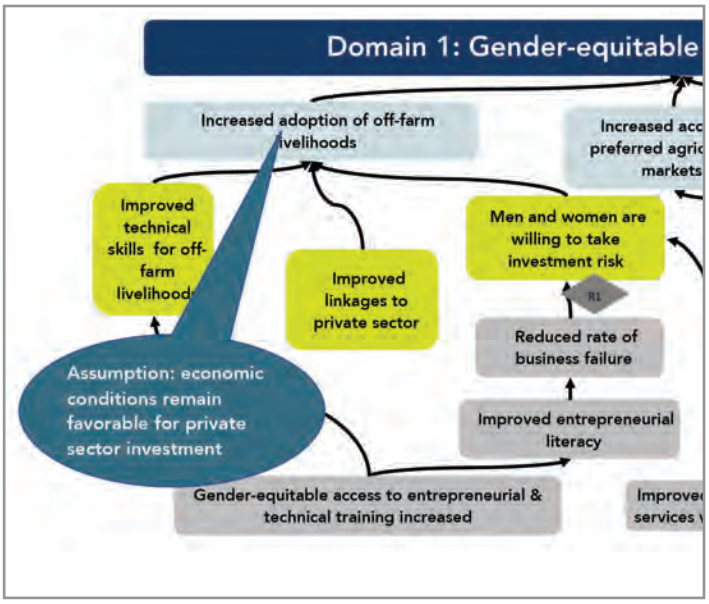
SLIDE 17

Identify Assumptions and Articulate Rationales

The next step in the TOC process involves identifying assumptions and articulating rationales. There is a wide range of interpretation about what constitutes an assumption in a TOC. Because this course is designed primarily for implementers of FFP DFSAs, we use FFP's definition.

Assumptions are conditions that are beyond the control of the project, but which we rely on for pathway achievement, and the overall success of the TOC.[6] Assumptions are conditions that are already in place that we do not expect to change during the life of the DFSA. Developing a thorough TOC requires identifying assumptions along all pathways. Evidence-supported assumptions strengthen the plausibility of your theory and the likelihood that stated outcomes will be accomplished.

Rationales differ from assumptions in that they are not conditions that are in place, but rather explanations and evidence that show why the causal logic in a TOC is plausible. For example, in the box above, this could be evidence demonstrating that when communities witness a lower rate of business failure within the specific operating context, men and women are more willing to take investment risk. There is no need to include a rationale for every link in a pathway—only include rationales if there is concern that the causal logic in the TOC diagram may not be obvious to all users.



Module 3 Session 2 discusses Assumptions and Rationales in more detail.

SLIDE 18

Prioritize Outcomes and Domains of Change that the Project Will Address

Because a TOC depicts a broad view of what needs to change in a given context in order to reach the overarching goal, pathways and domains of

6 USAID'S Office of Food for Peace. 2016. Policy and Guidance for Monitoring, Evaluation, and Reporting for Development Food Security Activities. Chapter 2, Section 2.1. Washington, DC: USAID.

change should not be limited to the changes that one organization or project can stimulate. We need to think constantly about external actors (public, private, local, national, international, etc.) who may contribute to achieving the goal. Sometimes this means that external actors will tackle an entire domain of change; more often it means that external actors will be responsible for several outcomes or outputs along a pathway.

Module 4 Session 1 describes how to prioritize outcomes and domains of change in more detail.

SLIDES 19-20

Identify Intervention Outputs for TOC Outcomes

Slide 19: The next step is to determine the most appropriate interventions to start the TOC wheels in motion.

We do not need to have an intervention output for every single outcome presented in the TOC diagram. By starting at the tail, or bottom, of each pathway we can identify lower-level outcomes or "actionable outcomes", where an output is necessary to catalyze change. When lower level outcomes are achieved, the TOC hypothesizes that those achievements should be sufficient preconditions to stimulate change at the next level. Thus, in most cases, additional outputs are unnecessary for the mid- and upper-tier outcomes.

Select appropriate interventions based on:

- a clear and logical link to at least one TOC outcome.
- an evidence-base–what is proven to work in the given context?
- a thorough analysis of assumptions.
- an opportunity analysis–What capacities are in place?
- the comparative advantage of your organization/consortium.
- the interest and influence of relevant stakeholders.

Slide 20: Practitioners often want to carry out every possible intervention that could be of some help to people. The reality is that budget, staffing, and time constraints limit what we can address. Furthermore, ***carrying out too many interventions may result in not doing any of them very effectively, ultimately undermining overall results.*** By using specific criteria, we can determine which interventions are necessary and sufficient to achieve TOC outcomes. This will contribute to more efficient and effective programming.

Module 4 Session 2 discusses in more detail, intervention selection and the placement of intervention outcomes in the TOC diagram.

SLIDE 21

Refine the TOC

In the final stages of the TOC process, we need to put effort into making the TOC diagram easily readable for those who have not been as close to the process. Use distinct colors, shapes, borders, text, and other graphic elements to differentiate TOC components. Module 4 Session 3 explains this in more detail.

SLIDE 22

Transfer the TOC diagram to the logframe

If you are developing the TOC for a FFP-funded DFSA, you will need to transfer the outcomes and outputs to your monitoring and evaluation (M&E) logframe. This slide displays USAID's Office of FFP guidance on the relationship between the TOC and the logframe. It is important to note that not all components in a TOC diagram must transfer to the logframe. Module 5 Session 1 provides more detail on this topic.

SLIDE 23

Identify Indicators for ToC Components

Indicators (traditional quantitative indicators and other measures) tell us how we will recognize achievement at each step in the TOC pathways. Indicators can be qualitative or quantitative. FFP DFSAs must define at least one indicator for every TOC component that is transferred to the logframe. Module 5 Session 1 provides more detail on this topic.

SLIDE 24

Complementary Documentation[7]

Complementary Documentation is a critical component of the TOC product. It allows you to communicate information that is not easily interpreted from the TOC diagram. It is a place to share references to evidence that supports causal logic, to identify external actors who are responsible for achieving outcomes in the TOC and provide details about their efforts, and to explain and provide supporting evidence for assumptions and rationales. You can present Complementary Documentation in matrices or in paragraph form. Sessions 3.2, 4.1, and 5.2 offer more detail on this topic.

SLIDE 25

Review annually, at minimum.

It is critical to conduct a thorough review of the TOC annually through the life of a project. The content and activities undertaken in the TOC review will differ depending on the year, but generally the purpose is to consider what has been learned; what has changed, including the context; and new evidence, including programmatic findings, since the previous review.

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7 As of 4/2019, FFP was still using the term "TOC narrative". This term will soon be replaced by "Complementary Documentation".

SLIDES 26-29

The TOC Product

The next set of slides gives an overview of the three elements that make up the TOC product. The TOC product has three elements: 1) a diagram that depicts the goal, domains of change (some or all of which will become FFP purposes), outcomes, assumptions, rationales, and key intervention outputs, and arranges these components in clear logical pathways; 2) Indicators that allow us to recognize the level of achievement for every component of the TOC; and, 3) the Complementary Documentation.

SLIDE 29

How do we know if the TOC adequate?

When the TOC diagram is plausible, feasible, and testable, we can generally consider it adequate. Remember, a unique aspect of a TOC is that you can and should modify it as you learn more about the operational context and conduct research and monitoring during project implementation.

- **Plausible:** It is evidence-based, and demonstrates a clear logical flow from the interventions that will spark change to the long-term goal.
- **Feasible:** It identifies realistic means of initiating change (intervention outputs and external actors who we expect to achieve outcomes our project is not addressing).
- **Testable:** It clearly outlines how the project will measure change at each step in the pathways.

A complete TOC diagram provides:

1	2	3
A visual representation of the expected change and how it will occur based on a clear and testable set of hypotheses.	A communication tool to gain agreement among stakeholders about what defines success, what it takes to achieve it, and who will do what. An outline of how interventions should be sequenced.	A monitoring and learning tool to understand what factors may be impeding expected change. A blueprint for evaluation that identifies metrics of success.
PLAUSIBLE	**FEASIBLE**	**TESTABLE**

SLIDE 30

TOC Checklist: A tool for determining quality and completeness of TOCs for FFP DFSAs.

In 2017, The TOPS Program and FFP collaborated to develop the TOC Checklist, a tool that allows TOC developers and reviewers to ascertain the quality and thoroughness of the diagrams and Complementary Documentation. The checklist is a summary of FFP criteria outlined in "USAID'S Office of Food for Peace Policy and Guidance for Monitoring, Evaluation, and Reporting for Development Food Security Activities", and explained in detail in the TOPS TOC training materials. It is updated annually and can be accessed in English and French at www.fsnnetwork.org/theory-change-training-curriculum.

SLIDES 31-32

Key Differences between Results Frameworks and TOCs

At the time of this writing, there is still some confusion about the difference between a TOC and a results framework. Some people claim that they are one in the same. In this course, we assert that results frameworks, at least to the extent that they have been designed and used by the development community in the past decade or so, are very different from TOCs. We list several distinctions in the box to the right.

Key Differences: Results Frameworks and TOCs

A TOC is developed using:

- Backwards mapping
- Rigorous causal analysis supported by an evidence base
- Rigorous attention to underlying assumptions
- TOC is not limited to those changes that one project will address
- TOC helps to prioritize optimal sequencing of interventions.

We can and should revise a TOC periodically!

Summary of Key Concepts

- A rigorous and comprehensive TOC *process* is the key contributor to developing a quality TOC *product*.
- The ongoing multi-step process begins with comprehensive data collection, includes in-depth causal analysis, and requires you to focus significant attention on assumptions and rationales (evidence). **We must continually revisit all steps as new information surfaces.**
- A TOC is not limited to what one organization or project can do.
- A TOC diagram is generally adequate if it is plausible, feasible, and testable.

Module 1 Session 2: Using a Conceptual Framework to Inform TOC Data Collection and Analysis

INTRODUCTION

Developing a TOC is a multi-step process that begins with having a well-organized, comprehensive understanding of the assets, resources, linkages, motivation, capacities, and needs of societal systems, communities, households, and individuals.

This session's plenary presentation introduces two conceptual frameworks (a resilience framework and the FFP 2016-2025 Strategic Results framework) as sample tools to inform the comprehensive data collection and analysis that is necessary for TOC development.

The small group activity (3 hours) asks participants to identify context-specific problems, strengths, and capacities by comparing the portfolios of various populations. Groups examine the quality of assets available to different populations, explore the systems, institutions, and processes that influence individual, household, and community well-being outcomes, and reflect on the various strategies individuals and households use in order to reach the outcomes they desire in their lives.

Estimated duration: 30 minutes

As we will see in Module 2, using a conceptual framework as a guide for organizing collected data sets the stage for rigorous causal analysis, an essential step in the TOC process.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Session 1.2 will help participants:

- Understand how to use a conceptual framework as a tool for informing and prioritizing comprehensive data collection.
- Practice using a conceptual framework to organize information in the sample datasets, in preparation for data analysis
- Become familiar with tools that can help practitioners interpret and analyze data.

COMPANION POWERPOINT

A PowerPoint presentation—1.2 Conceptual Frameworks—accompanies this lesson as a separate file.[8]

COMPANION HANDOUTS AND TOOLS

- Handout 1.2a Resilience Framework
- Handout 1.2b FFP Conceptual Framework for Food and Nutrition Security
- Handout 1.2c Office of Food for Peace Strategic Results Framework
- Instructions for small group work 1.2
- Datasets

The following tools should be loaded on USB drives for participants. You will use these tools in the small group exercise that follows this presentation.

- Tool 1.2a data synthesis
- Tool 1.2b trend analysis
- Tool 1.2c asset inventory
- Tool 1.2d opps & constraints
- Tool 1.2e stakeholder template

SLIDES 2 AND 3

The TOC Process and Session Objectives

The roadmap appears in every session to orient participants on where they are in the TOC process.

SLIDE 4

Conceptual Frameworks and Theories of Change

If used well, conceptual frameworks can promote comprehensive data collection and holistic problem analysis necessary to inform the development of a TOC. They help to ensure we are collecting the right kind of information—information that allows us to carry out rigorous and thorough causal analysis. They help us to identify evidence gaps, or in other words, to understand what we know and what we do not yet know. Ongoing data collection and analysis helps us fill those data gaps so that we can more accurately determine the causal links between problems.

8 Access the most current PowerPoint slides and handouts at www.fsnnetwork.org/theory-change-training-curriculum.

In this workshop, we will use the resilience framework and the FFP Strategic Results Framework as the organizing structures to assess each of the factors that influence well-being at individual, household and community levels.

SLIDE 5

Resilience Framework

The resilience framework integrates a *livelihoods approach*, a *disaster risk reduction (DRR) approach*, and elements of a *climate change approach* to address the underlying causes of vulnerability:

The livelihoods approach emphasizes the importance of access to diverse assets, institutional structures and processes, and the livelihood strategies pursued by households. The DRR approach focuses on preparedness, response, and recovery activities formulated in response to context-specific shocks and stressors. The climate change adaptation approach is similar to that of DRR, but focuses specifically on actions to be taken in response to and preparation for ongoing changes in climate. It considers potential threats caused by the loss of biodiversity and a decrease in ecosystem services.[9]

For a breakdown of all the components of the resilience framework, please access the supplementary PowerPoint slide deck: *Components of the Resilience Framework*. This tutorial, created by the TOPS Program and TANGO International is available at *www.fsnnetwork.org/theory-change-training-curriculum*.

SLIDE 6

Food for Peace Strategic Results Framework[10]

The FFP Strategic Results Framework demonstrates that "sustained improvement in food and nutrition security is an outcome of change at both an individual and an institutional, or "systems," level, no matter what the operational context." A full page version is at the end of this chapter.

Similar to the Resilience Framework, it emphasizes "risk management that, in addition to natural hazards like drought and flooding, addresses risks posed by fragility, conflict, pandemic disease, and climate change, as well as idiosyncratic shocks, like the death of a household head. "

9 Frankenberger, T., T. Spangler, M. Langworthy, and S. Nelson. 2012.
10 USAID Office of Food for Peace. 2016-2025 Food Assistance and Food Security Strategy. https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1867/FFP-Strategy-FINAL%2010.5.16.pdf

Finally, the FFP Strategic Results Framework highlights the importance of women and youth empowerment, enhanced social cohesion, and strengthened social accountability in the quest to improve food and nutrition security.

To learn more about each component of this Strategic Results Framework visit *https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1867/FFP-Strategy-FINAL%2010.5.16.pdf*.

SLIDE 7

What information do we need to collect to inform TOC development?

As noted earlier, a strong evidence base sets the TOC process apart from other common project design processes. A strong evidence base requires comprehensive data collection that allows you to identify context-specific problems, rather than simply relying on a generic analysis of the problems of the poor.

Often there is so much we don't know that it is hard to prioritize what information to collect and when to stop. Creating a list of information categories based on the components of a conceptual framework helps teams prioritize information they should gather, either through a secondary literature review or through primary research. Once you prioritize categories of information to collect, then you must identify several key questions within each category.

SLIDES 8-12

Information Categories

What information needs should we prioritize?

FACILITATOR

While participants view hard copies of the Resilience Framework and the FFP Strategic Results Framework, review the information categories.

Slide 8: You can identify critical information categories by breaking down the components of the conceptual framework you are using. We'll demonstrate using the Resilience Framework, while also highlighting relevant components of the FFP Strategic Results Framework.

Understanding the **context** is critical to conducting a thorough causal analysis—as mentioned, an early step in TOC development. **Contextual factors** include broad social, economic, political, environmental,

demographic, historical, and infrastructural trends that influence the range of strategies individuals, households, and communities are able to use. You can often obtain this information through secondary literature.

SAMPLE KEY QUESTIONS

- What BROAD trends exist, including seasonal and demographic trends, such as migration?
- What is the general availability and quality of public infrastructure and services (roads, electricity, schools, health care, markets, etc.)?

Level of aggregation is the unit of analysis for determining resilience of what or whom (e.g., the individual, household, community, institution, government, or ecosystem). When you plan data collection to inform TOC development, make sure your tools capture information that helps your team analyze the root of problems at various levels—individuals, households, communities, and systems.

Shocks and stressors: To design plausible TOCs and effective development programs, it is critical to collect data that helps your team understand precisely which types of shocks and stressors impact populations in a specific context.

SAMPLE KEY QUESTIONS

- What types of shocks and stressors impact the populations of interest? How frequently?
- Does exposure to shock vary by age? By sex? Ethnicity? Why?

Slide 9: Households have access to both **tangible and intangible assets**[11] that allow them to meet their needs. The ability to adopt various practices (e.g., nutrition and WASH, natural resource management (NRM), or the pursuit of a particular livelihood) is dependent on a sustainable combination of assets (in addition to other factors). Framed in a resilience lens, absorptive, adaptive, and transformative capacities also rely on a sustainable combination of assets.

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11 Assets include human, financial, natural, physical, social and political capitals. In this course we use the term "assets" when we refer to the collective group of livelihood assets; we use the term "capital" when we refer to a singular livelihood asset (e.g., social capital).

Understanding which assets males, females, youth and other sub-populations have access to, and the quality of those assets, is critical to informing TOC development. Some of this information may be available through secondary literature. Much of it may need to be captured using data collection tools specifically designed to explore this topic.

SAMPLE KEY QUESTIONS

- Which assets (human, financial, natural, physical, social and political capitals) do males, females, youth, and other subpopulations have access to?
- Who has greatest access? Who has least access? Why?
- What is the quality of those assets?

Slide 10: Structures, Systems, and Processes. To design plausible TOCs and effective development programs, it is essential that we collect data that help us understand the structures and systems in place. Data collection efforts should seek to identify the multiple institutions and organizations that directly influence individual, household, and community well-being outcomes. In the public sector, this typically includes national, regional, and local governments as bodies or structures that manage and implement political, judicial, and legislative processes. In civil society, examples of typical structures are nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), community-based organizations (CBOs), religious institutions, and trade associations. There also may be structures within the private or commercial sector.

We also need to collect information on the specific services they provide (e.g., humanitarian aid, social protection, nutrition and health, NRM and environmental resource management, agricultural, market, or financial). Much of this information will feed into the stakeholder mapping and analysis exercise.

Structures that influence well-being outcomes also include cultural, social, gender, and religious norms, so data collection efforts should seek to identify what prevails in the area of interest. Similarly, your team will want to identify the laws, regulations, and policies that influence people's lives.

SAMPLE KEY QUESTIONS

- What institutions and organizations are operating?
- What services do they provide (e.g., humanitarian aid, social protection, nutrition and health). Who has access?
- To what extent are institutions socially accountable to different populations?
- What information systems are in place within and near communities? Natural resource management systems? Environmental risk management? Agriculture, market, & financial? How well do they function? Who has access?
- What laws, regulations, and policies influence people's lives? Is there recognition and respect for human rights?
- What cultural, social, religious, or gender norms exist?
- Looking forward, as you refine the TOC it will be essential that your analysis consider these interactions.
- How do institutions and organizations directly influence individual, household, and community well-being?
- To what extent do governance mechanisms, policies and regulations, infrastructure, gender and cultural norms, community networks, collective action efforts, and formal and informal social protection mechanisms constitute an enabling environment for systemic change?

Slide 11: Individual and Household Strategies. Data collection tools should include questions that allow teams to determine the strategies individuals and households are using to enhance overall well-being. This includes livelihood strategies, risk management strategies, coping strategies, decisions about how to use or allocate various assets, etc.

SAMPLE KEY QUESTIONS

- What preventative measures are different populations using to avoid or reduce exposure to risk?
- How do different populations cope with the effect of shock? Are they using appropriate coping strategies to avoid permanent, negative impact?
- How are different populations securing a living (production and IGA)? What opportunities are available to men, women, and youth?
- What strategies are men, women, youth and households using to enhance overall well-being (e.g., advocacy, marriage, education, and diversification)?
- How do households invest / maximize available assets (tangible and intangible)?

- To what extent are the distinct populations adopting recommended nutrition practices? Recommended WASH practices? Recommended agricultural practices?
- What decisions are men, women, and youth making in order to survive? Are they making proactive and informed choices that allow for an effective response to changing environmental, climatic, social, political, and economic conditions?

Slide 12**: **Well-being Outcomes. Level of exposure to risk combined with the strategies an individual or household implements leads to a **well-being outcome**.

When collecting data to inform TOC development we must gain a general understanding of well-being outcomes because these measures will be key to determining TOC domains of change.

Well-being Outcomes	
Resilience Pathway	**Vulnerability Pathway**
• Food and nutrition security • Health security • Income security • Education security • Environmental security • Habitat security	• Food insecurity • Malnutrition • Chronic illness • Poverty • Illiteracy • Environmental degredation • Conflict

The box above highlights a number of well-being outcome measures that provide information on the extent to which individuals, households, and communities are successfully reducing and managing risk. Often this information will be availablethrough secondary literature.

SLIDES 13-22

Organizing and Analyzing Data

This set of slides prepares the participants for the first data organization and analysis activity.

SLIDE 14

What is Data Interpretation/Dynamic analysis?

Data Interpretation is attaching meaning and significance to the data, explaining descriptive patterns, and looking for relationships and linkages among descriptive units. Also called dynamic analysis, it is more inductive than descriptive analysis.

Data interpretation/ dynamic analysis helps to develop theories about the underlying structure of experiences or processes which are evident in the raw data. Descriptive analysis can tell us what but not why. For example, descriptive analysis might report that 45.3% of households state they use proper hand-washing practices or that seven of eight focus groups report that soap is seldom affordable and that washstands are typically located more than 100 meters from a home. Dynamic analysis would use qualitative and quantitative findings to theorize why the majority of the population is not adopting recommended hand-washing practices.

Dynamic analysis uses collected information to identify important changes, differences, and trends regarding people's level of risk and prepares you for identifying distinct target populations within the TOC. This is an important skill, not only during the creation of the TOC, but for revising the diagram throughout the project's life.

SLIDE 15

Organizing data by key themes

Arranging existing data by the key components of a conceptual framework helps to prioritize follow-up data collection efforts. It allows your team to clearly see what you know and what you don't know. At a glance, you will be able to determine the information categories for which data has been sufficiently collected as well as information categories for which there are critical data gaps.

Organizing data by key themes in a conceptual framework also aids data interpretation. It helps identify where strengths and weakness lie that may influence the capacity of various populations to achieve optimal well-being outcomes.

SLIDE 16

Tool 1.2a Data Synthesis

FACILITATOR

This slide presents the main data-organizing tool (Tool 1.2a data synthesis) you will use in the workshop. Ask participants to locate it on their USB.

While participants view hard copies of the Resilience Framework and the FFP Strategic Results Framework, review the categories listed in the matrix.

This matrix synthesizes all collected data into categories that correspond to the resilience framework and FFP Strategic Results Framework. For deeper analysis, you can separate data by well-being groups (e.g., poor, middle, or better off), sex, occupational categories, urban/rural dwellers, ethnic groups, or other relevant categories.

Once you organize all data (secondary and primary), review the matrix with your team to determine the most glaring data gaps. Document the gaps; prioritize those you must fill before progressing further in the TOC process; and make an action plan to obtain the information.

SLIDE 17

Data Interpretation: Several Options to Organize Data for Additional Interpretation

Once the initial data organization is complete, you may use other tools to find patterns and relationships in the data.

FACILITATOR

This slide presents an overview of additional data analysis tools. Typically, the workshop timeframe is not long enough to fully explore how to use each tool, but they have proven to be useful to practitioners after TOC workshops conclude.

Ask participants to locate the four tools on their USB and follow along as you provide details on how to use each matrix.

- Tool 1.2b trend analysis
- Tool 1.2c asset inventory
- Tool 1.2d opps & constraints
- Tool 1.2e stakeholder template

SLIDE 18

Trend Analysis Across Groups

This matrix allows us to compare the portfolios of different groups. Similar to the first matrix (Tool 1.2a), you can separate data by livelihoods groups, well-being groups (e.g., poor, middle, or better off), gender, urban/rural dwellers, ethnicities, or other distinguishing demographic factors.

It is important to consider factors such as:

- Recent shocks or stressors that have impacted different populations;
- How each group accesses food and money;
- Seasonal variations to access;
- The risk management and coping strategies currently used by each group.

SLIDE 19

Asset Inventory Across Groups

We have seen how tangible and intangible assets influence the extent to which an individual or household can adopt a desired behavior or pursue various opportunities. This matrix helps us examine asset differences between distinct populations, specifically exploring differences in Strengths, opportunities, needs, and constraints related to various assets. For example:

- The quality of each asset type;
- Who has access to various assets;
- Who controls access to the assets;

SLIDE 20

Opportunities and Constraints

When creating population portfolios, it is essential that we consider strengths and opportunities, as well as needs and constraints. This becomes particularly important in the design of projects to improve resilience capacities. If we design projects solely on an assessment of needs without an understanding of current strengths and capacities, important opportunities for building on existing capacities may be lost.

In the sample matrix in **slide 20**, we arranged the data to identify an asset portfolio for a rural population. For analysis, you would construct a similar matrix for all other groups in your assessment and then compare the portfolios side by side.

SLIDE 21

Stakeholders' Mapping and Analysis

To build a case for assistance, we must develop a comprehensive picture of what support exists and what is needed. Stakeholders' templates are a way to track existing activities implemented by ***external actors*** (e.g., national and local government agencies, NGOs, UN agencies, CBOs, etc.). It is important to include all types of agencies in the template, even if your project does not anticipate forming partnerships with these agencies. Additionally, in order to highlight complementarity and collective efforts toward a achieving the goal in a TOC, it is critical to include all types of activities, even if the project partners do not intend to implement similar activities.

Stakeholders' templates typically include:

Name of agency: Be specific. If a government agency, list the specific ministry, not just "government." List the contact/source of information so that if you need to go back and clarify or confirm information you can easily do so.

Type of agency: Government, local NGO, international NGO, UN, CBO, private business, etc.

Scope of assistance: For 'time,' identify project lifespan (when implementation began & when it is due to end). Include all phases, not just the current funding cycle. (Example: 2015 – 2020). For 'geographic', list all Districts and/or agro-ecological zones in which activities have been implemented. For 'participants,' when possible, identify specifics (e.g., urban women, children under 5, etc.) and planned total of direct project participants (exclude indirect participants).

Successful activities: List activities that directly contributed to, or are likely to contribute to, achievement of project objectives and/or lasting change. As much as possible, describe why these activities were successful.

Relatively unsuccessful interventions: Identify activities that could not be implemented as planned or were not helpful in achieving project objectives. To the extent possible, describe the reasons why these activities were ineffective.

Relationship with other stakeholders: Describe the role of other stakeholders in implementing or monitoring project activities. Identify complementarity and coordination with similar projects implemented by other stakeholders.

SLIDE 22

Summary

Conceptual frameworks are useful tools for:

- prioritizing and planning data collection efforts
- organizing data to determine what we know (via data saturation) and what we don't know (information gaps)
- organizing data by key themes to aid interpretation.

Thorough and ongoing stakeholders mapping and analysis helps:

- track existing activities implemented by external actors
- highlight potential opportunities for complementary and collective efforts

Small Group Activity 1.2

OVERVIEW

In this activity, participants will review the sample dataset that contains qualitative and quantitative findings. Ideally, they will receive the dataset a week or two before the workshop to allow extra time to become familiar with it.

The remainder of the first day should provide sufficient time for small groups to organize the information in the synthesis matrix, to ask questions and receive feedback from the facilitator, and to present their preliminary analysis to the other participants.

Estimated duration:

Group activity: 180 minutes

Plenary presentations: 45 minutes

COMPANION HANDOUTS AND TOOLS

The following printed handouts are essential to this lesson.

- Packet of raw datasets (for optimal experience, send these to participants 1–2 weeks before the workshop); data packets should contain a mix of primary data in the form of notes from focus group discussions and key informant interviews, as well as quantitative survey data
- Handout 1.2c Key Questions
- TOOLS 1.2a through 1.2e are located on participants' USB drives. Participants will primarily use 1.2a in the small group exercise that follows this presentation. If time, they may also use Tools 1.2b-1.2e.

SLIDES AND STEPS

FACILITATOR

Divide participants into an appropriate number of small groups. Groups should have no more than eight participants; six works very well. You may ask participants to count off by the number of groups (e.g., if there are 40 participants, count off by five if you want five groups of eight.). Alternatively, you may preordain small groups when participants arrive by presenting nametags or course materials with a number or colored sticker that corresponds with small groups.

Groups should have a mix of participants from different organizations and with different areas of technical expertise, if possible.

After participants settle into small groups, distribute the printed data packets. Remind participants that the datasets are also in a folder on the USB drive. It is quite helpful to have both printed and hard copies. Participants can use highlighters on the hard copies and can use the "search" function with the soft copies when they are trying to find information about a specific topic.

SLIDE 24

Small Group Activity 1.2

Review the activity instructions in plenary.

FACILITATOR

Designate group members to fill the following roles:

- One Chief of Party to make a final decision when the group comes to an impasse.
- 1-3 note takers for the data entry tools. You may wish to split up data entry responsibilities for the various categories in Tool 1.2a.
- One data gap documenter.
- One presenter.

Review the key questions (Handout 1.2c) and the dataset. Highlight findings in the dataset that will help you to answer the key questions.

Use Tool 1.2a on your USB to organize relevant findings in the dataset. You may also use the tools 1.2b-1.2e on the USB to help you organize and analyze the data to answer the key questions.

Make note of data gaps on a flipchart near the group. You will keep adding to this list over the course of the workshop.

2-3 groups will prepare a brief presentation to share their preliminary analysis in plenary. Please keep presentations to 10-12 minutes.

SLIDES 25-27

Key Questions

The key questions on this set of slides replicate those on Handout 1.2c. These questions guide the preliminary data analysis. They correspond to the FFP strategic framework and the resilience framework and include questions about the context, shocks and stressors, tangible and intangible assets, structures and processes, individual and household strategies, and well-being outcomes. Comparing and contrasting individuals, households, and communities across the conceptual categories, ensures that we analyze data from multiple angles.

Depending on how comprehensive the dataset is, it may not be possible to answer all of the key questions. Just as important as identifying what you know is identifying what you do not know. Note all data gaps on a flip chart. This will be critical information when you start to develop your TOC diagrams.

Prepare Presentations

FACILITATOR

Once the analysis begins to take shape, each group should create a presentation of their preliminary analysis (answers to the key questions). Stress that each group will have no more than 10 minutes to present. Depending on available time, you may suggest 10 minutes for presentation followed by 10 minutes of questions from the audience.

Plenary: PowerPoint Presentations

FACILITATOR

Each group should now be prepared to present for 10 minutes. Presentations should include a brief overview and discussion of the organized data, the preliminary analysis, and the key questions they were and were not able to answer.

It can be time-efficient and more engaging to select only 2-3 groups to present their findings, while all groups keep their slides up on their individual projectors for comparison. Be sure to rotate presenting groups for the next exercise if you elect to have only a couple of groups present.

Works Referenced in Module 1

Module 1 Session 2 content draws heavily from the following modules in a distance-learning course created for Florida International University and funded by the U.S. Agency for International Development's Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance (USAID/OFDA):

Starr, L., S. Nelson, and T. Spangler. 2013. *Livelihoods and Disaster Risk Reduction.* Module 1: Livelihoods and Resilience Assessment. TANGO International and Florida International University. Available at: drr.fiu.edu/courses/livelihoods-drr/

Starr, L., S. Nelson, and T. Spangler. 2013. *Livelihoods and Disaster Risk Reduction.* Module 2: Livelihood Systems and Risk Assessment. TANGO International and Florida International University. Available at: drr.fiu.edu/courses/livelihoods-drr/

ADDITIONAL WORKS REFERENCED

Béné, C., R.G. Wood, A. Newsham, and M. Davies. 2012. Resilience: New Utopia or New Tyranny? Reflection about the potentials and limits of the concept of resilience in relation to vulnerability reduction programmes. Institute of Development Studies and Centre for Social Protection IDS Working Paper. Vol. 2012 No. 405. *Centre for Social Protection Working Paper No. 006*. Available at: www.ids.ac.uk/files/dmfile/Wp405.pdf

Frankenberger, T., T. Spangler, M. Langworthy, and S. Nelson. 2012. *Enhancing Resilience to Food Security Shocks in Africa*. Department for International Development and TANGO International. Available at: www.fsnnetwork.org/sites/default/files/discussion_paper_usaid_dfid_wb_nov._8_2012.pdf

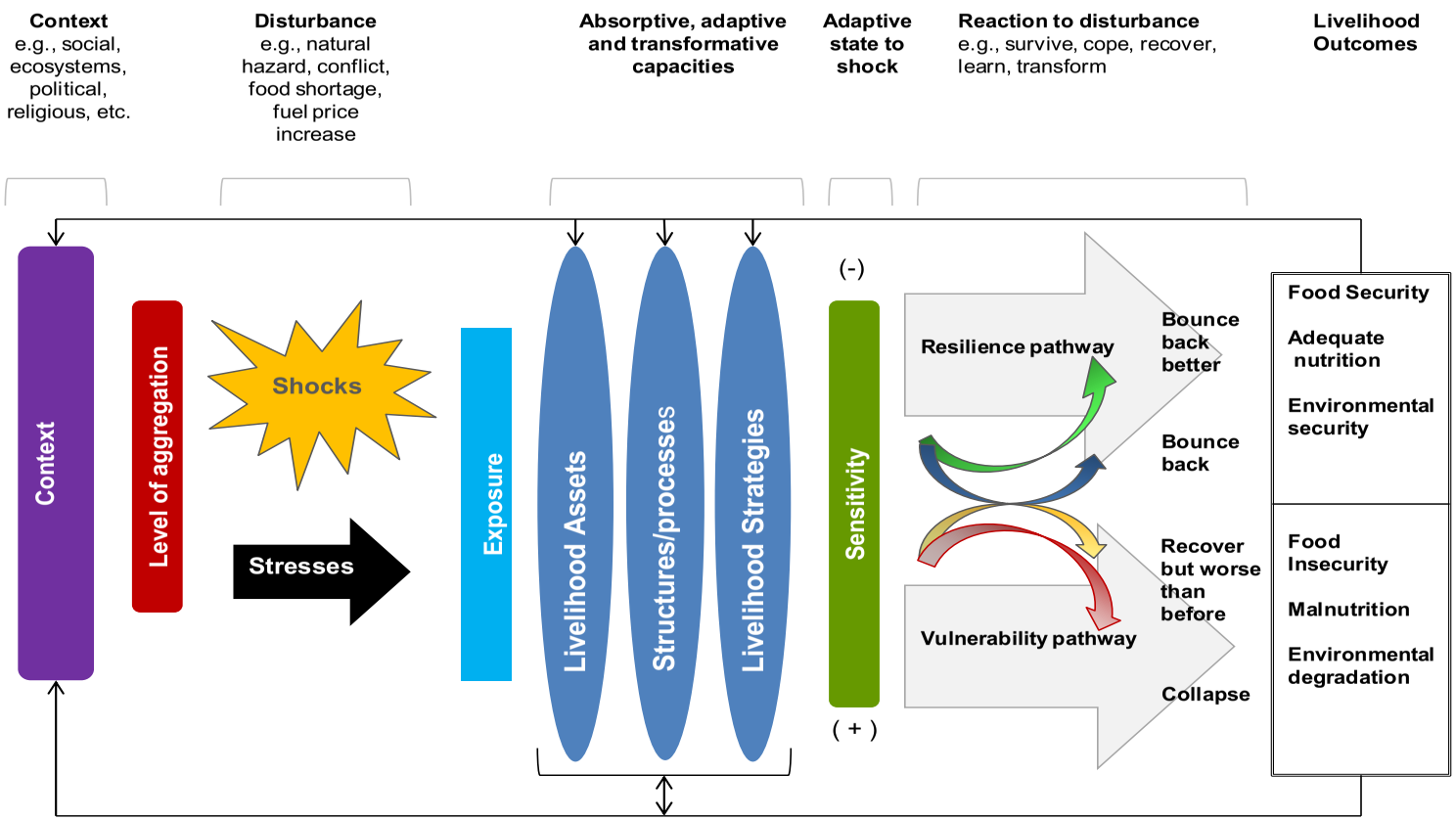
SOURCES FOR DATA COLLECTION GUIDANCE

International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies. 2007. *Global food security assessment guidelines*. Geneva, Switzerland. Available at: www.ifrc.org/Global/global-fsa-guidelines-en.pdf

World Food Programme Comprehensive Food Security and Vulnerability Assessment: www.wfp.org/content/comprehensive-food-security-and-vulnerability-analysis-cfsva-guidelines-first-edition

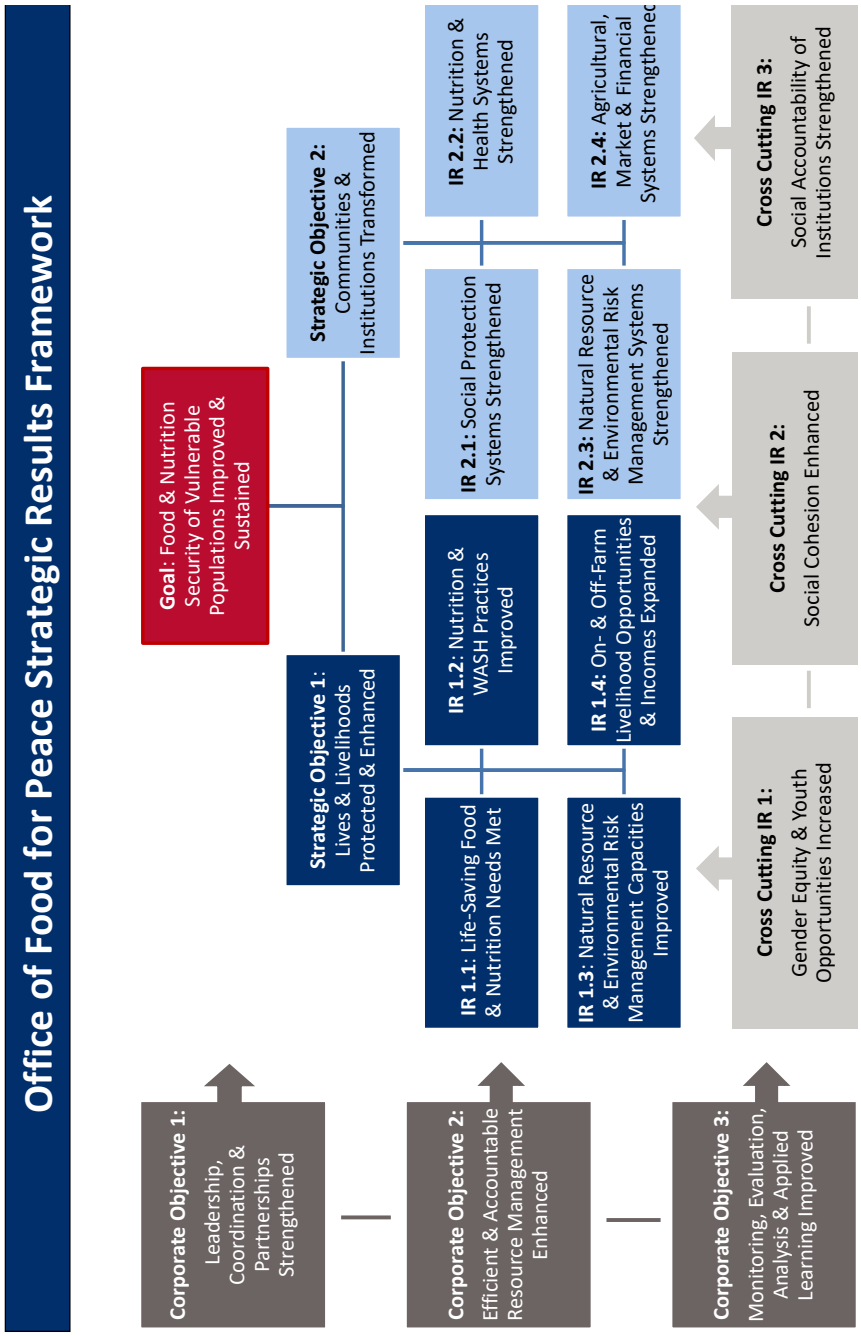
Wholey, J., H. Hatry, and K. Newcomer (Eds). 2004. *Handbook of practical program evaluation*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Resilience Framework



Source: Frankenberger, T., T. Spangler, M. Langworthy, and S. Nelson. 2012. *Enhancing Resilience to Food Security Shocks in Africa*. Department for International Development and TANGO International.

Food for Peace Strategic Results Framework



MODULE 2: MAKING THE THEORY OF CHANGE PLAUSIBLE: CAUSAL ANALYSIS AND PROBLEM TREES

About Module 2

OVERVIEW

Module 2 builds on Module 1, which provided an overview of the TOC process, stressed the importance of using a conceptual framework to guide data collection and analysis, and introduced a sample dataset that provides the foundation for the remainder of the training. With this background established, we now move on to causal analysis and problem trees, where participants will begin to see the TOC take shape.

The purpose of Module 2 is to set the foundation for TOC development through rigorous causal analysis.

The objectives of Module 2 are to help participants:

- Gain an understanding of how problem trees contribute to development of a TOC.
- Critically analyze and organize problems and causes into a logical flow

STRUCTURE AND WORKLOAD

Module 2 is composed of one facilitator-led presentation on causal analysis and problem trees. The module's objectives are reinforced using interactive plenary sessions, Q&A with the facilitator, and plentiful hands-on practice in small groups to develop a problem tree with strong causal linkages. The lesson concludes with small group presentations on the day's activities.

Module 2 Session 1: Causal Analysis and Problem Trees

Estimated duration:

Presentation: 25 minutes

Plenary critique of problem trees: 35 minutes

INTRODUCTION

This session focuses on using organized data to identify key problems and causes of those problems in a hierarchical, but not necessarily linear, flow. Using the preliminary analysis from Module 1, participants will identify the underlying causes of the broader problems and link them in a causal pathway. This analysis ultimately leads to the identification of:

- domains of change (some or all of which will become FFP purposes) that we expect will contribute to more positive well-being outcomes for vulnerable populations, and
- the set of preconditions that are necessary to achieve these domains of change.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Session 2.1 will help participants:

- Understand how to use causal analysis to create a problem tree.
- Identify strong and weak causal linkages in sample problem trees.
- Draft concise problem statements for all problem levels.
- Critically analyze and organize problems and causes into a logical flow.

COMPANION POWERPOINT

A PowerPoint presentation—2.1 Causal Analysis and Problem Trees—accompanies this lesson as a separate file.[12]

COMPANION HANDOUTS AND TOOLS

- Instructions for small group work 2.1
- Handout 2.1a simple problem tree
- Handout 2.1b causal stream examples
- Handout 2.1c 2-page problem tree
- TOOL 2.1 causal matrix is located on participants' USB drive. They may elect to use it in the small group exercise that follows this presentation.

SLIDES 2-3

Roadmap and Session Objectives

The TOC roadmap appears in every session as a means to orient participants about where they are in the process.

SLIDES 4-5

Holistic Problem Analysis/ Systems thinking

Holistic problem analysis or systems thinking improves our ability to design and implement **integrated programs**.[13] Integrated programming refers to a **sector-neutral or cross-sectoral approach**, with sectors and stakeholders working together and adopting complementary strategies to address common issues. It's a "we're in this together" methodology.

Holistic problem analysis does not necessarily mean that one organization must implement bigger, broader initiatives; it simply means that the team explores the "big picture", which helps to develop a TOC that portrays the "big picture" of how a goal might be reached, including the efforts of external actors.

Holistic problem analysis relies on rigorous **causal analysis**, the identification of common constraints and opportunities, feedback loops, and underlying causes of food and nutrition insecurity before going further in the design process. The process allows you to identify the pathways between causes and effects, including **cross-causal linkages** between problems. For example, why might a community experience income insecurity? Perhaps the causes

12 Access the most current PowerPoint slides and handouts at www.fsnnetwork.org/theory-change-training-curriculum.

13 The 2016-2025 FFP Food Security Strategy stresses the need for integrated programming. By layering, integrating, and sequencing initiatives, the hope is to further the objectives of each actor to a greater extent than by programming in isolation.

leading to this problem include negative health issues, low crop production, or any number of other factors that are not directly within a finance and/or economic pathway. Any problem that interacts with one part of a system also interacts with other parts of the system. Thus, holistic problem analysis always aims to investigate cross-causal linkages.

By rigorously exploring cause-effect pathways, we are better able to identify and prioritize the specific underlying causes that our project should address.

SLIDE 6

Problem Trees

Food and nutrition security outcomes are typically multifaceted and much more complex than a simple, linear cause-and-effect stream. Simple, linear models rarely allow for rigorous problem analysis – the **most critical (and often overlooked) element of project design.** A more effective means of organizing problems and causes is to create a problem tree.

Well-thought-out problem trees represent a systems-thinking approach to analyzing cause and effect and, in this light, are extremely useful for the TOC process because they help us to identify multiple causal linkages. While a problem tree is only one means of rigorous problem analysis, we elect to use the process in this course because of the ease in which we can transform a problem tree into a TOC diagram.

SLIDE 7

Prioritize an Overarching Problem

To start the problem tree exercise, prioritize an overarching problem. Generally, there are two main criteria for prioritizing an overarching problem:

- The significance or scope of the problem, and,
- The degree to which solving the problem will lead to improvements in well-being for the affected population.

In FFP-funded DFSAs, the overarching problem is often pre-determined to be food and nutrition insecurity.

SLIDES 8-13

Identify key problems, underlying causes, and contextual conditions

Slide 8: Once you identify an overarching problem, use your evidence base (all your organized data) to list an inventory of problems.[14] Writing the various

14 For the purposes of this training, problems are a condition or set of conditions that negatively affect people (e.g., death, infectious diseases, poor access to health or extension services, low agricultural production, inadequate housing) and contribute to compromised well-being outcomes.

problems down on sticky notes or index cards makes it easy to organize or filter them into three types of problems.

Key problems are broad conditions present in many poorer parts of the world that directly contribute to the overarching problem. A FFP RFA often identifies the key problems (e.g., inadequate income, poor health status, inability to manage risk, etc.), but you should use your evidence base to confirm that they are, indeed, the main contributors to the overarching problem.

Underlying (or root) causes are the entire collection of conditions that contribute to the identified key problems. A city or rural region may appear to have the same overarching problem (e.g., food insecurity) and key problems as other regions (e.g., low income, poor health status), yet the **specific** underlying causes of these issues may differ from place to place or population to population. In the TOC process, we must try to identify **context-specific** causes.

Contextual conditions are the social, economic, political, cultural, environmental, or climatic conditions (discussed in Module 1) that contribute to underlying causes and, at times, result from the overarching problem (i.e., the cycle of vulnerability). Contextual conditions can rightfully be considered as underlying causes, but in this curriculum we make a distinction based on whether an organization (ours or another actor) might be able to address the constraint with an intervention, or whether the constraint is a contextual condition that we must acknowledge when we design our interventions (e.g., ongoing drought, ongoing political instability or conflict, unpredictable precipitation, global price volatility, etc.).

FACILITATOR

Explain that the distinctions mentioned in this slide may not be apparent from the start. Practitioners must first create a thorough inventory of problems or limiting conditions. Then through organizing and filtering, the problems and causes will begin to fit into the various categories and develop a logical flow.

Slide 9: When thinking about the myriad of underlying causes for the key problems you identified, it is helpful to consider how limiting factors present themselves at various levels of society.

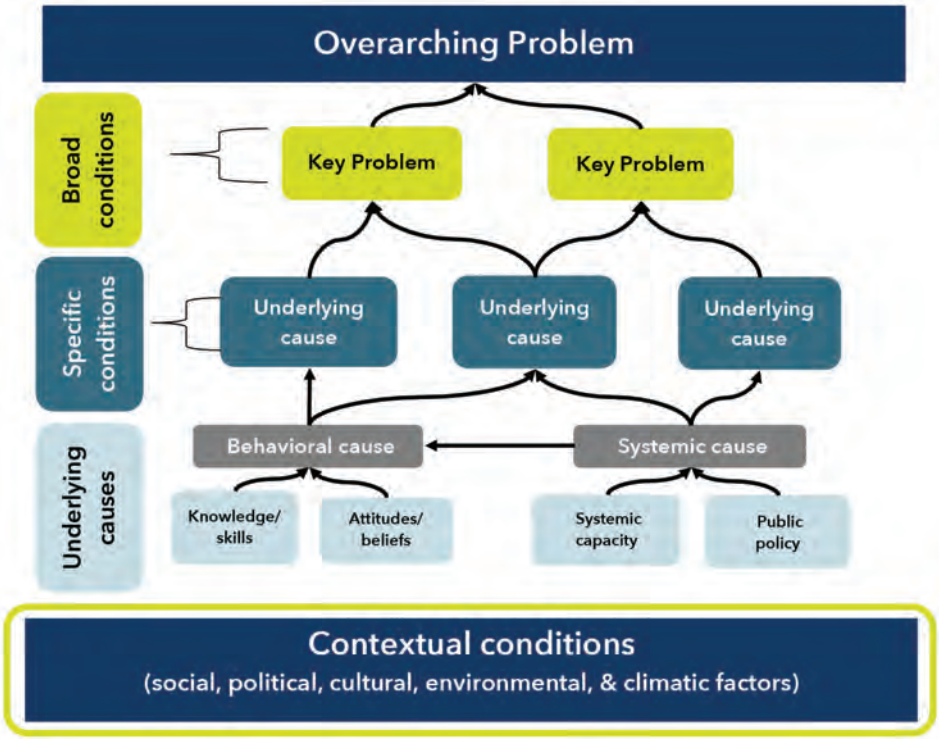
Household and individual level: Household and individual constraints (e.g., behaviors, knowledge and skill levels, attitudes) that limit opportunities to achieve positive livelihood outcomes.

Community level: Weak community cohesion or the lack of shared values that hinder the delivery and maintenance of social and economic infrastructure.

Systems level: Constraints that are external to the community, such as government policies, the delivery of social services, and market and social forces outside the community's control. Paying attention to causes at the systems level **is critical as FFP rolls out the 2016 -2025 strategy.**

Slide 10: This slide demonstrates a first basic sorting step, where you organize the evidence-based problems into various categories and positions–the very beginning of a problem tree.

Place **key problems** directly under the overarching problem.



Contextual conditions influence everything; therefore place them at the very bottom of the evolving problem tree.

In the middle of the evolving problem tree will be an assortment of **underlying causes.** They include:

- **Systemic weaknesses:** problems such as low institutional capacities, limited access to basic infrastructure, or unjust public policy. These weaknesses are primarily influenced by contextual conditions, and often end up in lower tiers of the problem tree.

- **Knowledge and skill levels, beliefs, and attitudes:** problems such as limited knowledge of optimal nutrition practices or conservation techniques, low financial literacy, a belief that women should never travel alone outside their community, or a youth's attitude that there is no future for youth in agriculture. Knowledge and skill levels, beliefs, and attitudes are rooted in contextual conditions and are influenced by systemic weaknesses. They often end up in lower to middle tiers of the problem tree.

- **Behaviors and practices:** problems such as limited adoption of WASH, agriculture, or IYCF practices, limited use of health and nutrition services, limited use of risk management strategies, or low participation of women and youth in local decision-making bodies. Behaviors and practices are greatly influenced by knowledge, skills, attitudes, and beliefs, as well as systemic weaknesses and contextual conditions. These problems often end up in the middle to upper tiers of a problem tree.

- Finally, some underlying causes do not fall into any of the three categories above. We can refer to these as **specific conditions**. They are typically the result of **behaviors and practices** and we often find them in the upper tiers of a problem tree, directly below the key problems. They include problematic factors such as high prevalence of early marriage, high rates of HIV/AIDS infection, low agricultural production, severe soil erosion, or low employment for young adults.

When creating the inventory of problems on sticky notes or index cards, it can be helpful to use distinct colors for the different types of problems (systemic, knowledge/skills, behaviors/practices). This allows for a visual cross-check during the process to ensure that your team is not overlooking a category.

Slide 11: The matrix demonstrates the intricate linkages between problems and their causes and highlights how the relationships are not linear. Note how a particular type of underlying cause might be both the cause and the effect of another type of underlying cause.

Slide 12: offers a simplistic example (**a causal stream is rarely this simple and linear)** of how a chain of causes/conditions leads to an overarching problem. The arrows demonstrate that a lower cause leads to a higher problem. However, to

Examples of Causal Streams

Condition (broad)	High rates of HIV/AIDS Infection	**Problem**	Low Farm Family Income	Condition (broad)
		Cause	Declining Crop Yields	Condition (specific)
Behavior	People engage in unsafe sex practices	**Cause**	Severe Soil Erosion	
		Cause	Farmers use improper plowing techniques	Behavior
Behavior/ Attitude	Condom use is limited	**Cause**	Farmers unaware of benefits of contour plowing	Knowledge
Beliefs/ Knowledge	Condom use has negative cultural connotations	**Cause**	No access to extension services or information	Systemic

Adapted from: Caldwell, R. 2002. Project Design Handbook, Ed. T. Barton. Prepared by TANGO International for CARE.

demonstrate the process of causal analysis it is important to begin discussing the slide at the top and work down.

FACILITATOR

While viewing the slide, ask participants:

- What are the causes of high rates of HIV/AIDS infection? (One answer: people engage in unsafe sex.)
- Why do people engage in unsafe sex practices? (One answer: Condom use has negative cultural connotations.)

Slide 13: You can use a matrix similar to Tool 2.1 (slide 13 and also on the participants' USB) to explore various types of underlying causes that contribute to key problems. Prior to a design workshop, matrices such as this can be sent to team members, including country-level staff as a preliminary exercise. During the pre-design "capture" phase, matrices such as this can also be useful tools for organizing data as it comes in from the field.

SLIDES 14 AND 15

Problem Statements

Problem trees are made up of a collection of clear, concise problem statements. Once an overarching problem is identified, it needs to be specifically phrased so that it identifies what, who, and where. For example:

> *Food and nutrition insecurity for vulnerable pastoralist households in Fafan zone of Ethiopia.*

Other levels of problems may or may not need to state who and where—it will depend on whether distinct populations or regions are disproportionately affected by a limiting condition.

Sometimes a problem disproportionately affects a subset of the impact population (e.g., women, children, youth, elderly, farmers, the chronically food insecure, or people in one District or agro-ecological zone). In these cases, specify the subset impact population in the problem statement. This will set the stage for specific TOC outcome statements and ensuring that intervention targeting tightly aligns to the causal analysis.

Note that the example on page 55 does not include all the causal linkages in between the underlying causes and the overarching problem statement. The purpose of the example is to demonstrate subset groups, not causal linkages.

Impact group identified in overarching problem statement	Subset group identified for underlying cause
Food and nutrition insecurity for vulnerable pastoralist households in Fafan zone	Limited consumption of nutrients by **children under age 5**
	Limited access to extension services for **women in rural districts**
	Low agricultural yields for **agro-pastoral households**

SLIDES 16–18

Problem Tree Examples

FACILITATOR

These three slides contain example problem trees. They all contain strong causal linkages as well as flawed logic. Spend about 20 minutes in plenary reviewing these samples.

Focus first on identifying the overarching problem, then the underlying causes, then the contextual conditions. Next, ask participants to identify underlying causes that are due to behavior and practice; those that are the result of knowledge, skills, attitude, beliefs; and finally underlying causes that are due to systemic constraints.

Next, ask the group to identify strong and flawed causal logic.

SLIDE 19

Summary

Summary of Key Concepts

Different populations or different regions may appear to have the same overarching problem and broad categories of causes, yet it is critical that we identify ***context-specific*** underlying causes.

Causes occur at multiple levels (individual, household, community, and broader systems and institutions) and in various forms (behaviors and practices, knowledge, skills, and attitudes; and systemic weaknesses). For this reason, a thorough causal analysis is important.

A problem tree helps us to visualize the non-linear causal logic of problematic conditions.

A problem tree with strong causal logic, comprised of evidence-based problems, can be easily transformed into a TOC with strong causal logic. In the long run, putting substantial effort toward the problem tree exercise will save time and improve the quality and rigor of the TOC diagram.

Small Group Activity 2.1

INTRODUCTION

Activity 2.1 gives participants an opportunity to review their organized data from Module 1, identify key problems, draft problem statements, and use causal analysis to create a problem tree.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

This activity will help participants:

- Use their evidence base (from sample dataset) to identify problematic conditions affecting distinct populations
- Draft clear, concise problem statements at all levels
- Critically analyze and organize problems and causes into a logical flow that will inform the development of the TOC diagram.

COMPANION HANDOUTS

- Instructions for Activity 2.1

FACILITATOR

Facilitator: Activity 2.1 can be broken into mini-activities:

1. Draft overarching and key problem statements (30 minutes).
2. Create a problem tree using causal analysis (3 hours).
3. Midway plenary Q&A about the process (15 minutes).
3. Gallery walk and peer review (30 minutes).
4. Refine causal analysis based on peer feedback (1 hour).

Estimated duration: 5.5 hours with breaks

- Handout 2.1a problem tree tiers
- Handout 2.1c 2-page problem tree

Slides 20–30 of the PowerPoint Presentation for Session 2.1, replicate the activity instructions.

FACILITATOR

Instructions:

Designate group members to fill the following roles:

- One Chief of Party to make a final decision when the group comes to an impasse.
- One data gap documenter.
- Several group members devoted to digging for more evidence.
- One graphic guru to capture the problem tree in electronic format.
- One presenter.

Use the preliminary analysis (Tool 1.2a and PowerPoint presentation) carried out during Day 1.

1. Identify an overarching problem and write a problem statement:

- WHAT: Determine the condition the project intends to address. (Generally, if the project is responding to a FFP RFA the condition will be FOOD and NUTRITION INSECURITY.
- WHO: Identify the population affected by the condition
- WHERE: The area or location of the population.

2. Prioritize key problems (broad conditions) and draft concise statements:

Generally, these are the most challenged well-being outcomes identified in Session 1.2, although you may include more key problems, if warranted.

3. Document underlying causes on sticky notes:

- Create an inventory of underlying causes on sticky notes, starting with the evidence you organized in Exercise 1.2. Write each cause as a concise statement, making them as specific as possible, e.g., limited access to business development training. If the population most affected by a specific condition is a subset of the population in the overarching problem statement, make it clear in your statement, e.g., limited access to business development training for women and youth.
- To make sure you **include the various types of causes (systemic, knowledge, skills, attitudes, beliefs; and behaviors and practices**) it can be helpful to use a different color sticky note for each type, or make some type of coding on the sticky note. As your problem tree develops, you will start to recognize if you have overlooked any type of cause. Note: not every underlying cause will fit into these three categories. Remember some underlying causes are simply the result of the three types of constraints.
- **Get into the practice of noting the evidence source for each underlying cause**, either on the back of the sticky note or better yet, simultaneously capture the problem and corresponding evidence in an Excel sheet or other document. This will help proposal writers later on. Try to limit the causes you include to those for which you have evidence. If you don't yet have an evidence base for an underlying cause, but there is a strong hypothesis and group agreement to include the constraint, use some type of coding on the sticky note to indicate this is still an evidence gap (different color paper, different color text, border, etc.), and note the evidence gap on your running flipchart list.

FACILITATOR

Following the afternoon break, all groups will share their evolving problem trees in plenary via a gallery walk, asking for critical peer review and feedback.
During this time, you may ask for any specific questions related to the processes of causal analysis. Depending on how many questions are raised and how much time is available, the facilitator may ask additional questions, such as:

- Did the data analysis process from Module 1 provide a logical basis for drafting an overarching problem statement? If not, then why?
- Is there consensus or disagreement among the group regarding the causal linkages? How are you resolving differing opinions?

Following the gallery walk, participants should spend another hour or so in their small groups continuing to refine their problem tree based on feedback from peers and facilitators.

Works Referenced in Module 2

Starr, L., S. Nelson, and T. Spangler. 2013. *Livelihoods and Disaster Risk Reduction*. Module 2: Livelihood Systems and Risk Assessment. TANGO International and Florida International University.

Overseas Development Institute. 2009. Planning Tools: Problem Tree Analysis. Available at: www.odi.org/publications/5258-problem-tree-analysis

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Overseas Development Institute. 2009. Planning Tools: Problem Tree Analysis. Available at: www.odi.org/publications/5258-problem-tree-analysis

The Evaluation Toolbox. 2010. Problem Tree/Solution Tree Analysis. evaluationtoolbox.net.au/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=28&Itemid=134

MODULE 3: MAKING THE THEORY OF CHANGE PLAUSIBLE: FROM PROBLEMS TO SOLUTIONS

About Module 3

OVERVIEW

Module 3 builds on all previous modules. Module 1 provided an overview of the TOC process, and stressed the importance of using a conceptual framework to prioritize data collection efforts and organize that data for analysis. In Module 2, participants practiced using causal analysis to create a problem tree. With this background established, we can now delve into potential solutions, identifying the conditions that need to be in place in order to achieve an overarching goal.

The purpose of Module 3 is to demonstrate how proposed project outcomes must be rooted in evidence-based problems. The objectives of Module 3 are to help participants:

- Understand how to convert a problem tree to a solution tree, a precursor for the TOC diagram.
- Identify domains of change and their corresponding pathways, especially non-linear pathways.
- Appreciate the critical need to examine the assumptions and rationales that support causal logic.

STRUCTURE AND WORKLOAD

Module 3 is composed of facilitator-led presentations on two topics:

- 3.1 From Problems to Solutions
- 3.2 Assumptions and Rationales

The session objectives are reinforced using interactive plenary sessions, Q&A with the facilitator, and small group work.

Module 3 Session 1: From Problems to Solutions

Estimated duration: 25 minutes

INTRODUCTION

In this session we demonstrate how to transform problem trees to solution trees. The solution trees allow us to identify the series of incremental changes (pathways) that are, when taken together as a set, sufficient to achieve a goal. As we refine these pathways, the solution tree begins to transform into a TOC diagram.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Session 3.1 will help participants:

- Identify non-linear aspects of TOC pathways
- Understand how to depict causal linkages across pages.
- Distill pathways to only the essential outcomes.

COMPANION POWERPOINT

A PowerPoint presentation—3.1 From Problems to Solutions—accompanies this lesson as a separate file.[15]

15 Access the most current PowerPoint slides and handouts at www.fsnnetwork.org/theory-change-training-curriculum.

SLIDE 2

The TOC Process

The TOC roadmap appears in every session to orient participants about where they are in the process.

SLIDE 3

From Problems to Solutions

The easiest way to create a solution tree is to invert, or "flip", the problem tree. The problem statement becomes the goal, the key problems flip into domains of change, and the remaining underlying causes flip into solutions. Later in the process, you will sort these solutions into outcomes and outputs. Of course, for this to work properly, the causal linkages in the problem tree must be logical and agreed upon—a key reason to avoid rushing through the problem tree exercise during an actual project design process.

SLIDES 4-5

Convert Problem Statement to a Goal

The TOC goal should specify the kind of enduring change we hope to see in the lives of an impact population group. Now that we have drafted a strong overarching problem statement, we can use this statement to create the overarching goal, by "flipping" it. To flip the problem statement to a goal, reframe it in terms of desired change and state it as if it is already achieved. For example "Sustained food and nutrition security for small farm households in Southern Karamoja."

Remember: WHO, WHAT, WHERE, but not HOW. The "how" will be explained by the TOC diagrams and Complementary Documentation.

Some *poor* examples of a long-term goal are:

- To improve food security, income, and resilience for chronically food-insecure rural women through their social and economic empowerment.
- To improve local facilities and to empower and engage 10,300 targeted households (50% women) in agricultural productivity, income, and employment towards improving their basic food needs in the districts of Jalapa and San Isabel.

FACILITATOR

These are real samples from FFP-funded activities with identifying factors changed. Ask the group to identify why these are poorly-worded goals.

Answer: The first statement has too many goals in one statement…"food security, income and resilience." It also states how the project will achieve this -- "through their empowerment." Goals should never include the "how." Additionally, sufficient income and resilience to shock are preconditions to food security. By refining the analysis, we can usually determine the causal hierarchy of these multiple outcomes and simplify the goal statement.

The second statement also has multiple goals. This becomes problematic for M&E to determine whether the project achieves the goal, if for example, data show improvement in income, but not for agricultural productivity.

SLIDES 6-7

Convert Key Problems to Domains of Change

Identify the broad conditions in your problem tree that significantly contribute to the overarching problem. These are the key problems that you will flip to domains of change.

Domains of change (some or all of which will become FFP purposes) are main areas in which change must occur in order to be able to reach the goal. A number of domains of change may be necessary to achieve the goal. Domains of change are comprehensive; they are not limited to what one organization or one project will address. This is a key difference between a results framework and a TOC! It is also the reason that we do not use the term Purpose yet. There may be a domain of change that an external actor will be responsible for producing. Although necessary to reach the goal, it would not be referenced as a FFP Purpose nor transfer to the logframe.

To flip the domain of change statements simply rephrase the key problems to demonstrate a desired, *measurable* result.

Examples of Converting Key Problems to Domains of Change

Key problem →	Converted to... → Domain of change
Limited ability to recover from shock	**Improved ability to recover from shock**
Poor nutritional status of children <5 years	**Improved nutritional status of children <5 years**
Inequitable and limited income	**Increased equitable income**

SLIDES 8–12

Convert Underlying Causes to Solutions

Slide 8: Next, move through the problem tree to the myriad of underlying causes. Convert each problem/cause in a similar manner, ensuring that you restate each problem as a measurable result. The language should convey a condition already resolved rather than something that will happen in the future, or an action.

Some examples:

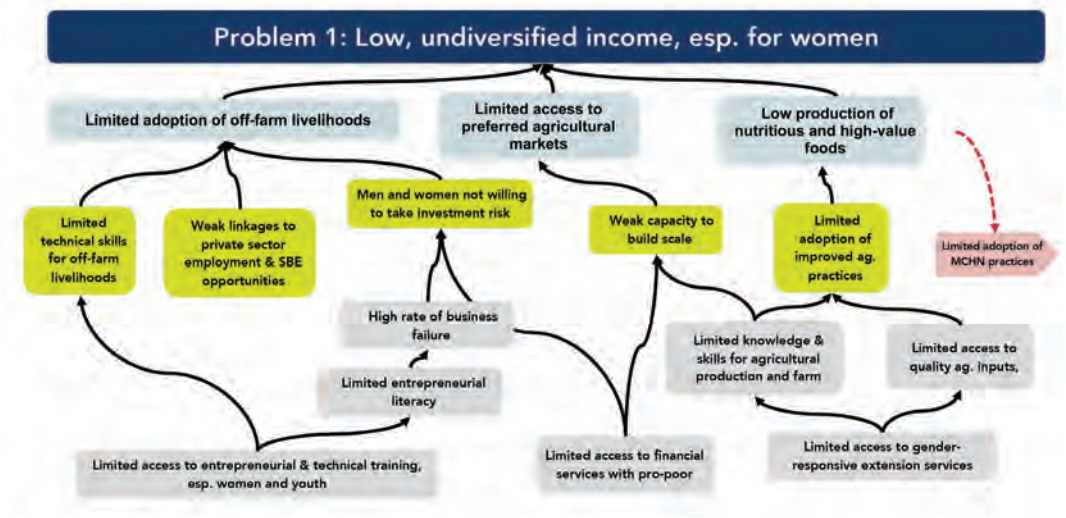
- Key problem: Childhood malnutrition.
- Domain of change: Childhood nutritional status improved – **Yes!**
- Domain of change: Childhood nutritional status *will* improve – **NO!**

- Underlying cause: Children under age 5 consume inadequate amounts of nutritious foods
- Solution/Outcome: Increased consumption of nutritious food for children under age 5. **Yes!**
- Solution/Outcome: Increasing consumption of nutritious food for children under age 5 *through MCHN education.* **NO!**
-
- Underlying Causes: Children who get diarrhea do not receive oral rehydration therapy (ORT).
- Solution/Outcome: Increased administration of ORT by caregivers for children with diarrhea. **Yes!**

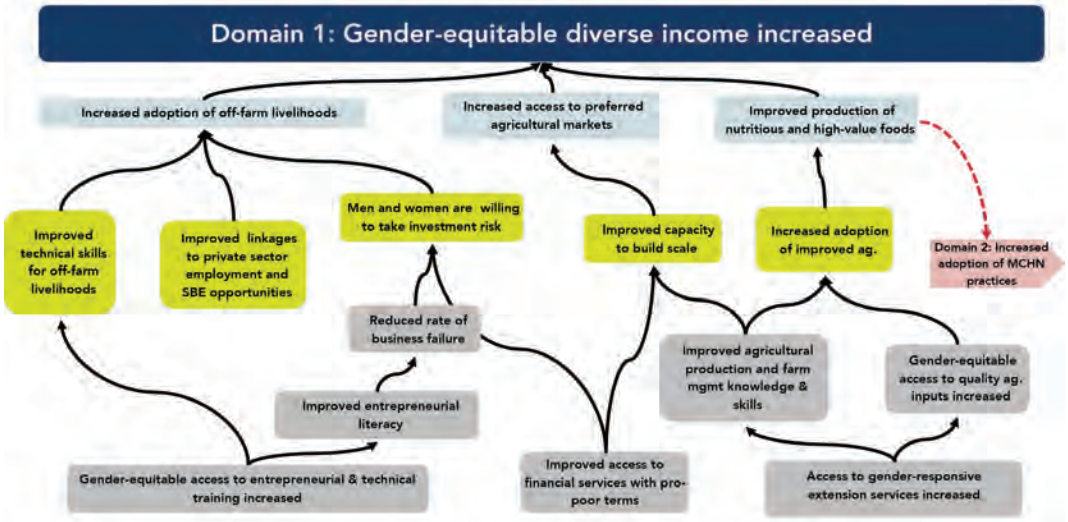
Slide 9: When you begin to flip problems to solutions, don't forget to clearly identify the subset impact populations—groups who are disproportionately affected by the problem—in your solution statements, e.g., *improved access to business development training for women and youth.* Even if a problem does not disproportionately affect one sex, when relevant, try to highlight gender inclusiveness in the solution statements (e.g., *increased adoption of diversified livelihoods by men and women* or *access to gender-responsive extension services increased*). You want to show that your TOC recognizes the importance of these outcomes benefitting all genders.

Slides 10-11 demonstrate how underlying causes flip into solutions. It is important that the solution tree mirror every single limiting condition present in the problem tree. Again, this is because the TOC diagram is not limited to what one organization or project will address. External actors may be responsible for producing some of the critical outcomes.

PROBLEM TREE



SOLUTION TREE



Slide 12: Exceptions to the "flip". In some cases, the flip from problem to solution simply does not make sense. For example, if we flip a contextual condition such as *increased prevalence of drought* we end up with *reduced prevalence of drought*. This is outside of any actors control, and thus not an achievable outcome. Instead of flipping these contextual problems, leave them stated as challenging conditions at the bottom of the solution tree. They will serve as reminders when the time comes to design effective interventions that are responsive to the context.

SLIDE 13-15

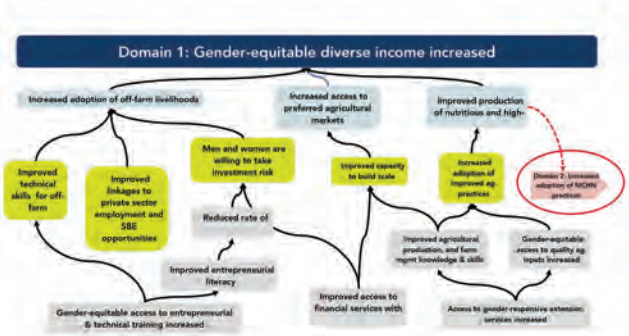
TOC Pathways

Slide 13: A TOC pathway illustrates the series of incremental changes that are that are, when taken together as a set, sufficient to achieve a domain of change. You can identify a pathway of change by tracing all the linkages

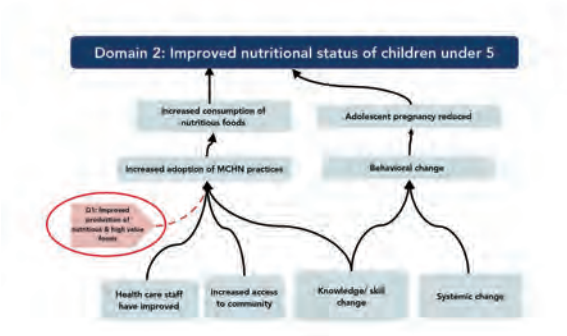
(arrows) that lead to each domain of change. Some solutions will feed into more than one domain of change and should be a considered a part of all pathways they contribute to.
FFP refers to the collection of solutions as *preconditions*, which comprise both outcomes and outputs. The term "incremental outcomes" is common among other TOC users.

Slides 14-15: Similar to the problem tree, to ensure the diagram is user-friendly it may have to stretch onto several pages. It is common for each domain to have its corresponding pathway presented on a separate page; FFP-funded activities are **required** to provide a separate detailed page depicting each Purpose pathway. Be sure to make the linkages between pathways clear. An easy way to do this is to repeat outcomes that cross pages on both pages using a different shape or color to indicate a linkage, and identifying the domain page to which it links. After numbering the outcomes to correspond to the logframe, you will update the linkage with the actual outcome number, rather than the domain number.

PAGE 1



PAGE 2



SLIDE 16-19

Refining TOC pathways

Slide 16: By refining the pathways, we start shifting from a solution tree to a TOC diagram. Similar to the causal logic checks we carried out for the problem tree, we must review the solution tree following the pathways upstream. One way to do this is by using "IF-AND-AND- THEN" statements to tell the story of change. For example, "IF *men and women's technical skills for off-farm livelihoods improve* AND *linkages to private sector employment and SBE opportunities increase*, AND, *men and women are willing to take an investment risk* THEN we expect to see *increased adoption of off-farm livelihoods by men and women.*

FACILITATOR

It is more effective to return to Slide 14 to demonstrate telling the story of change, rather than asking participants to view the text.

Slide 17: The refining process is the time to weed through and determine which solutions are necessary and sufficient to achieve each domain of change.

You may discover that some solutions are actually definitional rather than causal linkages, or that some solutions represent an intervention output or an indicator rather than a necessary and sufficient outcome. If so, you may need to remove these statements from the diagram, or, in the case of outputs you may need to change the shape and color to make them distinct from outcomes.

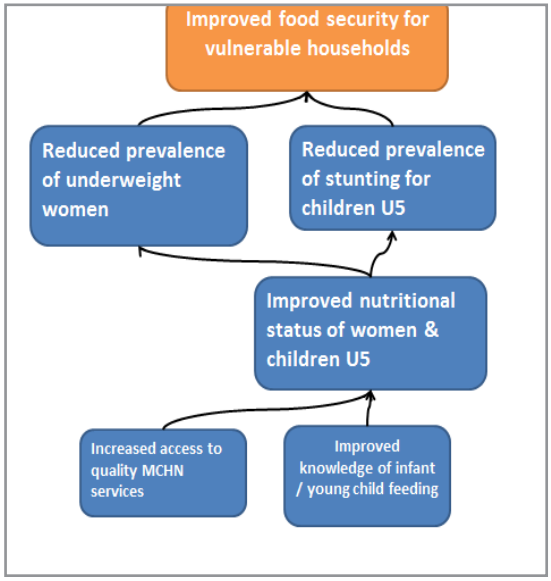
Slides 18-19: In early stages of TOC development is common to find solutions that are definitional versus causal linkages. For example, *"Household members wash their hands at critical times"* is one way that *"All household members apply good health practices"* it does not cause household members to wash their hands. Similarly, *"improved infant and child feeding practices by male and female caregivers"* does not cause "*Improved adoption of nutrition and health practices by caregivers of children under 5";* it IS one of the desired nutrition and health practices we hope caregivers will adopt. Using a livelihoods example, *"increased crop production"* and *"increased livestock production"* do not cause *"increased agricultural production"* they describe aspects of it.

Slide 18: Examples of definitional versus causal linkages.

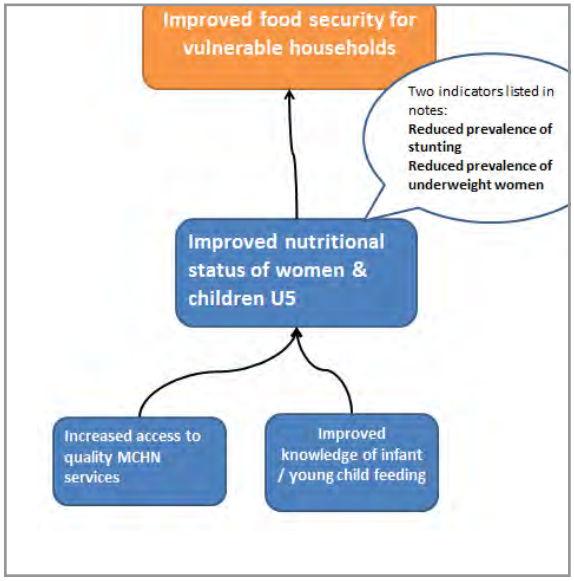
In all of these cases, we can unclutter the TOC diagram by removing the definitional solutions and instead incorporate them as measures for the outcomes above. A measure of handwashing could be an indicator for the outcome related to good health practices. A measure of IYCF practices could

be an indicator for, "*improved infant and child feeding practices by male and female caregivers*", and measures for crop and livestock production could be indicators for "*increased agricultural production*".

Casual logic before weeding



Casual logic after weeding. Two solutions removed because they are actually indicators for the outcome above.



You may also find that some of your solutions are actually outputs–the immediate products of interventions. Examples include *latrines rehabilitated to hygienic sanitation standards*, or *vulnerable groups trained on DRR practices*. When you determine that a solution is an output, leave it in the diagram, but code it with a new shape or color so outputs are distinct from outcomes.

Once we complete the process of refining the TOC pathways, we can start using the terms outcomes and outputs instead of solutions. It is also time to start referring to the diagram as a TOC instead of a solution tree.

SLIDE 20

Keep the Problem Tree Up-to-Date

If you make any changes to the solution tree logic also make these changes in the problem tree. It is important that the two diagrams mirror one another. At this point in the process, it is common to get carried away and start inserting preconditions we believe are necessary to stimulate change in the outcome tier above. If this happens, it will not take long before you create a

diagram that is no longer based on evidence. When team members have the urge to add a new precondition to the evolving solution tree, first identify the corresponding problem. Then confirm the extent to which that problematic condition actually exists in the proposed project area.

SLIDES 21-22

Breakthroughs

A **breakthrough** is a change that represents a leap forward or an advance on a pathway that is not easily reversed. Generally these are new skills or practices with limited backsliding or variation in adoption once learned (e.g., literacy, policies implemented and enforced by a stable government, or a positive change in attitudes and beliefs). Breakthroughs may or may not be catalyzed by your organization's efforts or the efforts of external actors, but because breakthroughs often are preconditions for multiple outcomes at the next outcome tier, it can be very helpful to pay attention to them when teams identify implementation priorities and visualize and track project progress.[16] In the sample TOC on **slide 22**, the breakthrough *"positive change in gender roles and norms"* is show in a different color and shape than other preconditions.

SLIDE 23

Summary

Summary of Key Concepts

- The problem tree and solution tree diagrams mirror each other. We must continue to analyze and review the logic to ensure each solution appropriately corresponds to each evidence-based problem.
- State all solutions as measurable results.
- A **pathway** illustrates the series of incremental changes that are that are, when taken together as a set, sufficient to achieve a domain of change.
- To ensure the diagram is user-friendly it may have to stretch onto several pages. It is common for each domain of change to have its corresponding pathway presented on a separate page.
- The solution tree begins to transform into a TOC diagram once we refine the pathways and ensure that we have not included solutions that are definitional, rather than causal, and that we depict outputs or indicators as such, rather than as outcomes.

16 FFP does not require that DFSAs highlight breakthroughs in the TOC diagram.

Small Group Activity 3.1

INTRODUCTION

Participants will have time during this activity to refine and finalize their problem tree, "flip" it into a solution tree, check the pathway logic, and finally, refine the pathways so that they only include essential outcomes. At the end of this activity, each group will have a rudimentary TOC.

Estimated duration: 3 hours

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

This activity will help participants:

- Convert their problem tree to a solution tree in a straightforward, structured way.
- Reframe problem statements as measurable results statements
- Identify non-linear aspects of pathways and link them across pages in their solution tree diagram.
- Distill TOC pathways to only necessary and sufficient outcomes.

COMPANION HANDOUT

Instructions for Small Group Activity 3.1.

SLIDES

Slides 22-25 replicate the activity instructions.

FACILITATOR

Instructions:

1. Start with the electronic version of your group's problem tree. Save a new document as "solution tree" and begin to "flip" all problem statements.
   - Flip the overarching problem to a goal and the key problems to domains of change; Reframe all underlying causes to solutions.
   - Make sure all solution statements convey a measurable result.
   - The solution statement should clearly identify groups who are disproportionately affected by the problem (e.g., youth, women, pastoralists, etc.).
   - Highlight gender inclusiveness in the solution statements, as relevant.

2. Distill pathways to essential outcomes. Check the causal linkages between each outcome and the pre conditions that feed into it. Try to tell the TOC story of change using IF-AND-AND-AND-THEN statements.

This process often identifies remaining flaws in causal logic.

- Ask whether each solution is a logical and necessary precondition for the solution above it.
- Check for solutions that are definitional rather than causal linkages. Remove them. Consider whether they should be an indicator instead. If so, make note for later logframe inclusion.
- Ask yourself if the group of preconditions leading to each solution are sufficient to stimulate change.
  - Check for inclusion of systemic, knowledge- or skill-related, and behavioral solutions.

3. Check for solutions that are actually outputs –immediate products of interventions. Examples include latrines rehabilitated to hygienic sanitation standards, or vulnerable groups trained on DRR practices. If you find an output, leave it in the diagram, but change the shape and color it so it is easy to distinguish outputs from outcomes in the TOC. Later in the process, we will ensure there is an output linked to all lower-level outcomes.

From this point forward, we will start to use the terms outcomes and outputs instead of solutions. Your TOC is on its way!

4. Keep your problem tree up-to-date. If logic shifts in the TOC, it must also shift in the problem tree. This is an excellent way to crosscheck causal logic. It also prevents teams from inserting solutions for problems that were not identified earlier

5. Identify breakthroughs (outcomes not easily reversed or outcomes that if achieved will pave the way for multiple outcomes at the next level) and code them with a new shape or color.

6. Continue to document evidence gaps. Knowing what information you need to capture at a later date will assist you to refine the TOC over the Activity's life

Module 3 Session 2: Assumptions and Rationales

INTRODUCTION

Session 3.2 introduces assumptions and rationales, TOC components which further explain why we expect the TOC pathways to achieve the stated goal.

Estimated duration: 30 minutes

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Session 3.2 will help participants:

- Identify conditions that are important to the success of a TOC, or some portion of it, but are outside of a project's control (assumptions).
- Determine what facts and other information will help explain why a pre-condition or set of preconditions is necessary and sufficient to ensure an outcome (rationales).
- Understand how to insert assumptions and rationales in the TOC diagram and support them with evidence in the Complementary Documentation

COMPANION POWERPOINT

A PowerPoint presentation—3.2 Assumptions and Rationales—accompanies this lesson as a separate file.[17]

SLIDES

SLIDE 2

The TOC Process

The TOC roadmap appears in every session to orient participants about where they are in the process.

SLIDE 3

Assumptions

The type of assumption that FFP wants depicted in the TOC diagram is an ***external assumption***. External assumptions are conditions (often contextual) that are important to the success of a TOC, or some portion of it, but that

17 Access the most current PowerPoint slides and handouts at www.fsnnetwork.org/theory-change-training-curriculum.

are outside of a project's control.[18] Assumptions are conditions or things that already exist and that we expect will remain in place for the duration of the project cycle. Practitioners implementing FFP DFSAs must explain the assumptions in detail and support them with evidence the Complementary Documentation.[19]

Examples:

- Annual flooding in project area will not exceed the 10-year flood level.
- Government agricultural extension worker turnover rate remains stable.
- Economic conditions remain favorable for private sector investment.
- Conflict and displacement remain relatively stable.
- No new infectious livestock diseases emerge.

FACILITATOR

In the workshop setting, we explain the step of identifying assumptions separate from the solution tree process, simply to isolate the concepts and avoid presenting too much information at once. Once your team is familiar with the concepts, the identification of assumptions will logically take place as you are vetting the logic in the solution tree. You will continue to refine and identify new assumptions during the life of the activity

SLIDES 4-8

Common External Assumption Mistakes

This set of slides take examples from actual DFAP design workshops to demonstrate common pitfalls.

Slide 4: Including factors that should be within the realm of the activity's influence. Examples include:

- Men and women are willing to take investment risk.
- Men and women will be open to new practices.
- Husbands will allow wives to attend VSLA meetings
- Income-earning potential is sufficient to sustain participants' engagement with value-chain actors

These are internal implementation assumptions. We might assume efforts to convince people of the value of a particular practice will be successful

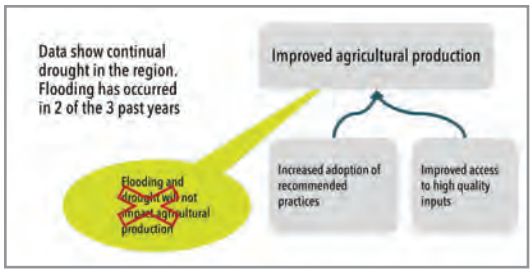
18 Because this course is oriented toward staff from FFP-funded activities, we elect to use USAID's definition of assumptions, recognizing that other TOC guidance discusses several types of assumptions. Common among TOC literature are 1) internal logic assumptions (e.g., assumptions related to the connections between the underlying causes and the problem that stakeholders are trying to address or assumptions that explain why each outcome is necessary to achieve the long-term impact (assumptions behind the if-then hypotheses); 2) internal implementation assumptions (e.g., assumptions related to why we believe our efforts will result in a particular outcome; and finally, 3) assumptions about the context/environment in which the TOC is situated that do not contribute to the success of pathways (e.g., routine flooding or shock). If flooding or other shock is routine, although we assume it will happen during the life of the activity. This is a problematic contextual condition that must be considered in during intervention design.

19 As of May 2019, FFP is still referring to the Complementary Documentation as "TOC Narrative", but terminology is expected to change very soon.

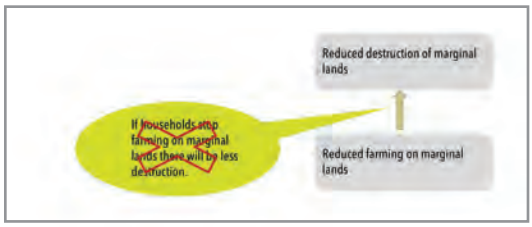
because they have been successful in the past and in similar contexts. However, FFP guidance asserts that the degree of openness or willingness rests on the success of the DFSA's intervention. Because all of these conditions are within the DFSA's control (via adaptive management), **FFP does not want implementing partners to depict internal implementation assumptions in the TOC diagram.**

Although these assumptions will not show up in the TOC diagram (if it is for a FFP DFSA), an essential part of good project management is making sure that internal implementation assumptions hold. It is critical to monitor these assumptions about implementation; if there is any indication that they are not true, we must review the design and implementation of the intervention, and determine what should change so that we can rely on these assumptions.

Slides 5 and 6: Stating an assumption that your evidence base shows to be untrue. For example, inserting the assumption "Flooding and drought will not impact agricultural production" when data show continual drought in the region and flooding events in two of the past three years. See box to the right.



Slide 7: Simply restating the outcome-to-outcome linkage. See box to the right.



Slide 8: Stating something that indicates you need specific evidence. For example, *Government will commit human resources*, or *Adequate post-harvest storage facilities exist to absorb increased production*.

Slight alterations to the wording of these two assumptions will demonstrate the condition is already in place. For example, *Government continues to commit human resources or Adequate post-harvest storage facilities remain in place to absorb increased production.* These statements indicate that we have confirmed that the condition exists, or is in place. Include evidence to support the claim in the TOC Complementary Documentation.

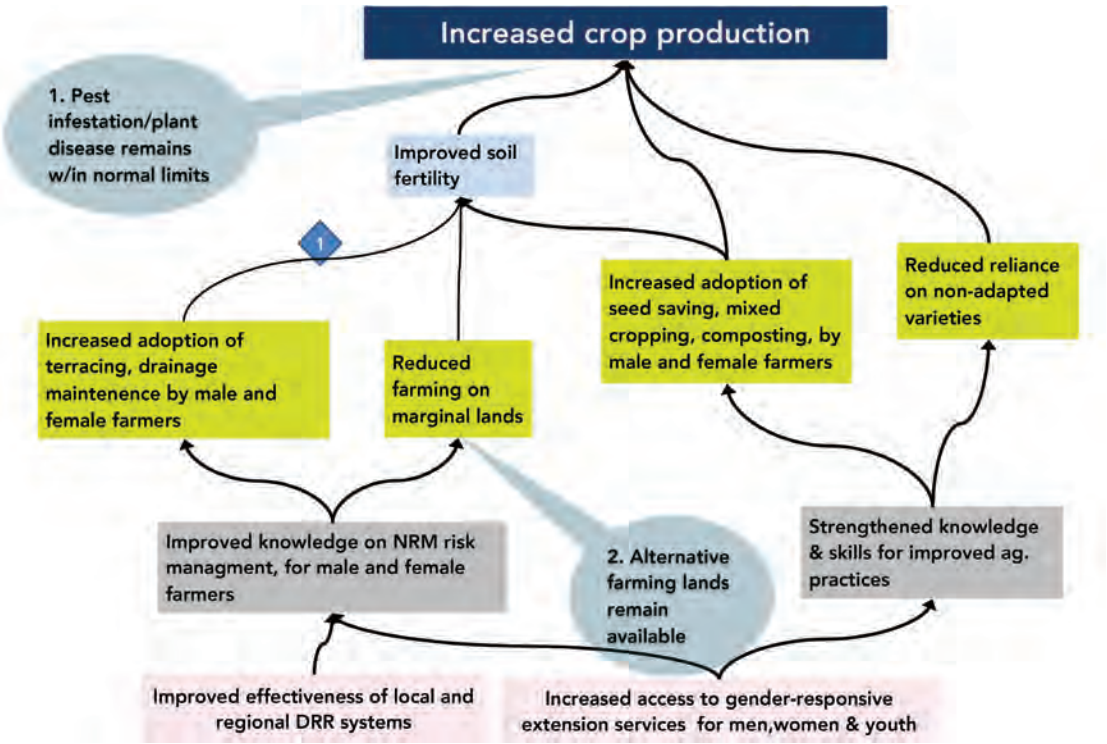
FACILITATOR

Ask participants to share their own examples of assumptions they have struggled to articulate.

SLIDE 9

Which assumptions do not meet FFP criteria?

Which assumptions in this diagram appear inadequate as worded? What type of evidence is needed to support potentially inadequate assumptions? Answers are in table below.

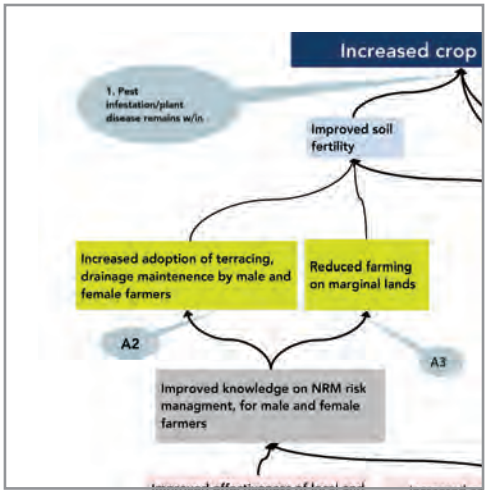


Pest infestation/plant/ disease remains within normal limits	Acceptable IF trend data in the Complementary Documen-tation support it. Document what normal limits are and why you believe that nothing will change (i.e., projections from the Ministry of Agriculture).
Female-headed farming households have sufficient labor available to implement measures	Risky as worded: Formative research must demonstrate that #2 is true, otherwise this is a "magic wand" type of assump-tion. Plenty of evidence exists to show this more likely to be a risk to female-headed HH adoption. Find out what the current time burden is. This will be criti-cal to adoption and has implications for intervention design.
Farmers will be motivated to integrate practices	Unacceptable: Within the activity's control.
Alternative farming lands are available.	Risky as worded: needs provide evidence in the Comple-mentary Docu-mentation showing an adequate amount of alternative land available AND accessible to small farmers. If evidence exists to support this assumption, the wording could slightly change to reflect the condition is already in place: "Alternative farming lands remain available and acces-sible to male and female small farmers"

SLIDE 10

Questions to help identify and support external assumptions

- What conditions CRITICAL to achieving this outcome, are already in place?
  - What evidence do we have to convince us that a condition will remain in place through the life of the Activity?
- Is whether the condition remains in place completely outside the control of the Activity?
- Are we taking anything for granted related to the political, environmental, or social context?
- Are we taking anything for granted about other stakeholders and their capacities?



SLIDE 11

Inserting assumptions in the TOC diagram

Assumptions need to stand out from outcomes, therefore choose a unique shape and color for them. If there is not room to fully articulate an assumption, insert an identifier such as A1 or A2, and record the full assumption and the evidence supporting it in the TOC Complementary Documentation.[20]

SLIDES 12-13

Supporting assumptions in the Complementary Documentation

Slide 12: FFP requests that DFSAs provide additional information in the Complementary Documentation to explain assumptions. This information includes:

- Your expectation of whether the assumption will remain true through the LOA
- Evidence to show why you believe the assumption will hold true through LOA
- A brief discussion of the risks to a pathway if the assumption fails
- A brief discussion of the contingency plan that your activity will put in place if the assumption fails.
- A brief description of ways you will monitor the assumption to determine if it is holding or if it has failed

20 As of May 2019, FFP is still referring to the Complementary Documentation as "TOC Narrative", but terminology is expected to change very soon.

Slide 13: Sample assumptions matrix for Complementary Documentation. FFP requests that the links between references in the TOC diagram(s) and the details in the Complementary Documentation are easy to follow. One means of making the links easy to follow and effectively supporting assumptions is to create a matrix with columns for the assumption reference number and the key categories of requested information. This slide is a sample only. The template is available at www.fsnnetwork.org/theory-change-training-curriculum. Feel free to adapt it to suit your needs. FFP has no preference for whether DFSAs present Complementary Documentation on assumptions in matrix or paragraph form.

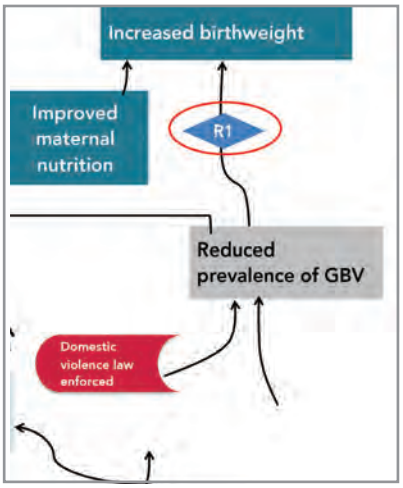
SLIDES 14-21

Rationales

Slide 15: Rationales are different from assumptions. They help explain underlying logic and provide evidence about why outcomes in a pathway of change are necessary preconditions to outcomes above them. We don't need a rationale for every connection in the pathway, but rather only for those for which the causal logic may not be obvious to all users.

For example, a rationale might be necessary to support a link showing that reduced prevalence of gender-based violence is a contributor to increased birthweight. If readers are not aware of evidence showing that physical abuse in pregnancy increases the risk of low birthweight,[21] this causal logic might not make sense, and a rationale is necessary.

To note a rationale in the TOC diagram, make a small reference in the diagram and provide the full explanation and evidence in the TOC Complementary Documentation. Evidence can come from a variety of quantitative or qualitative sources (e.g., academic, activity-specific, or community-based research).



Rationales may support outcome-to-outcome linkages or in many cases, they support output-to-outcome linkages. We describe the differences below.

Slides 16-17: Outcome-to-outcome linkages. Sometimes links between outcomes are well established and accepted among the development community. In these cases, we do not need to add a rationale. For example,

- Increased consumption of nutrient-rich food contributes to improved nutrition
- Adopting recommend improved agricultural practices contributes to increased production.

21 Valladares E., M. Ellsberg, R. Peña, U. Högberg, L. Persson, and A. Lars. 2002..

At other times, the plausibility of a linkage is not as well established. For example,

- Increased access to credit contributes to increased investment in small-business enterprise or production. *There are plentiful examples of credit used for weddings, dowry, or other non-productive means.*
- Improved control over household finances for women contributes to increased use of health care services. *Women have many spending priorities. Using health services may not always be at the top of the list.*
- Increased access to nutrient rich food contributes to increased consumption of nutrient-rich food. *Numerous examples exist of households selling rather than eating kitchen garden produce*

Alternatively, it may not be obvious outside of specific sectoral circles. For example,

- Mentally stimulating environments contribute to infants growing faster physically than infants who do not have the same stimulation
- Reduced gender-based violence contributes to increased birthweight

In these situations, evidence (in the form of a rationale) will strengthen the plausibility of the causal linkage.

FACILITATOR

Ask participants to share examples of evidence that would strengthen the plausibility of the causal linkage examples on the slides.

Slide 18: Output-to-outcome linkages. Rationales can be an effective way to demonstrate your organization's institutional innovation or comparative advantage when it comes to intervention selection. Using evidence from project reports and research, rationales will further explain the causal logic promoted by the TOC diagram and enhance the plausibility of output-to-outcome linkages. For example, past project reports may demonstrate that an organization's unique design of permagarden trainings resulted in large numbers of farmers adopting the practice as well as an impressive spillover effect for indirect beneficiaries who witnessed the increase in production experienced by their neighbors.

Slides 19-20: Questions to help determine if a rationale is necessary for outcome-to-outcome linkages

- Is the link between precondition and outcome well-established in the development community in your implementation context? AND

- Is the linkage common knowledge for a wide variety of practitioners (i.e., it is not just common knowledge for a very specific group of sectoral specialists)?

If yes to both questions, there is no need to insert a rationale. If no to either question, a rationale will strengthen the plausibility of the causal logic.

- Will the rationale strengthen the argument that a specific intervention will lead to a particular outcome or multiple outcomes?

If yes, include the rationale.

Slide 21: Sample rationale matrices for Complementary Documentation. FFP requests that the TOC Complementary Documentation include full explanations of the rationales that support TOC linkages that are not obvious to the average reader and include succinct text, web links, or other references to research and literature to support the rationales.

FFP requests that the links between references in the TOC diagram(s) and the details in the Complementary Documentation are easy to follow. One way to do this is to create a matrix that offers the Rationale reference number and a column for the evidence. This slide offers two different example templates. Both are available at www.fsnnetwork.org/theory-change-training-curriculum. Feel free to adapt the sample matrices to suit your needs. Although this curriculum promotes the use of matrices, FFP has no preference for whether DFSA's provide Complementary Documentation on rationales in matrix or paragraph form.

SLIDE 22

Summary

Summary of Key Concepts

- Assumptions and rationales serve different purposes in the TOC.
- External assumptions highlight conditions that are important to the success of a TOC, or some portion of it, but are outside of a project's control.
- Rationales help explain underlying logic and provide evidence about why outcomes and outputs are necessary preconditions to outcomes above them, particularly for linkages that may not be obvious to all users.
- You do not need an assumption or a rationale for every causal linkage. Only insert them in the TOC diagram when it makes sense to do so.
- Use a different color and shape to highlight assumptions and rationales in the TOC. If the diagram becomes too crowded, insert an identifier that will link to the details in the Complementary Documentation.
- Support assumptions and rationales in the TOC Complementary Documentation

Small Group Activity 3.2

INTRODUCTION

This activity provides hands-on practice for identifying and articulating assumptions that are critical to the success of TOC pathways, for determining where rationales might enhance the plausibility of pathway linkages, and for systematically tracking the evidence base that supports assumptions and rationales in the TOC Complementary Documentation.

Estimated duration: 2 hours

COMPANION TOOL

The Complementary Documentation matrices are located on the USB.

SLIDES

Slides 24-25 replicate the activity instructions.

FACILITATOR

Instructions: Assumptions and Rationales

1. Start with your TOC diagram and the Complementary Documentation matrices on your USB.
2. Select one pathway and check for assumptions between each precondition or group of preconditions and the outcome above.
3. Insert assumptions in the TOC diagram using a different color and shape. Assign each assumption a number (A1, A2 etc.).
4. Record the assumption and the evidence that supports the assumption in the Complementary Documentation matrix on your USB).
5. Discuss linkages where rationales might be needed–areas where the causal logic might not be clear to all users.
6. Add an identifier (e.g., R1, R2, R3) in the TOC diagram, using a distinct shape and color.
7. Enter notes to support the rationale in the Complementary Documentation matrix. This includes web links, references to literature, or other evidence.
8. If time, repeat steps 1-7 for other pathways.

Works Referenced in Module 3

Guijt, I. 2013.ToC Reflection Notes 3: Working with Assumptions in a Theory of Change Process.

Starr, L., S. Nelson, and T. Spangler. 2013. *Livelihoods and Disaster Risk Reduction*. Module 3: Program Design. TANGO International and Florida International University.

Taplin, D., H. Clark. 2012. *Theory of change basics: A primer on theory of change*. New York, NY: ActKnowledge.

USAID Bureau of Democracy, Conflict, and Humanitarian Assistance Office of Food for Peace. 2016. *Technical Reference for FFP Development Food Assistance Projects*. Chapter II Mandatory Program Design Elements. Washington, DC.

USAID Office of Food for Peace. 2016. Policy and Guidance for Monitoring, Evaluation, and Reporting for Development Food Security Activities. Section 2.1. Washington, DC.

MODULE 4: MAKING THE THEORY OF CHANGE FEASIBLE

About Module 4

OVERVIEW

Module 4 builds on previous modules. Module 1 provided an overview of the TOC process, and covered conceptual frameworks. In Module 2, participants practiced using causal analysis to create a problem tree. In Module 3, the focus shifted to solutions, including drafting a goal, identifying domains of change and their corresponding pathways, and articulating assumptions and rationales. We now enter the latter stages of the TOC process. Module 4 explains how to prioritize the domains of change and outcomes that a project will address. Additionally, participants identify intervention outputs and deeply explore the assumptions and risks associated with them. Finally, the lesson offers a few tips on making the TOC diagram more reader-friendly.

The purpose of Module 4 is to transition from a TOC that is plausible—the causal logic is in place—to a TOC that is feasible—the necessary actions to set change in motion are identified as are the various actors who will carry out each action. The objectives of the lessons in Module 4 are to help participants:

- Determine which domains of change and outcomes a project will address.
- Prioritize intervention outputs that will lead to intended outcomes.
- Recognize assumptions and risks related to proposed interventions.
- Make the TOC diagram reader-friendly.

STRUCTURE AND WORKLOAD

Module 4 is composed of facilitator-led presentations on three topics:

- Session 4.1: Selecting Project Purposes and Outcomes
- Session 4.2: Selecting Interventions
- Session 4.3: Refining the TOC diagram

The module's objectives are reinforced using interactive plenary sessions, Q&A with the facilitator, and small group work.

4.1 Module 4 Session 1: Select project outcomes and purposes

Estimated duration: 25 minutes

INTRODUCTION

As discussed, a TOC is not limited to the changes that one project will influence. Typically, many stakeholders contribute to changes necessary to reach a common overarching goal. By using stakeholder mapping and asking various stakeholders to vet the TOC we can determine who exactly will be responsible for what.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Session 4.1 will help participants:

- Understand basic selection criteria for determining the domains of change and outcomes that a project will address.
- Become familiar with how to document outcome and output responsibilities of external actors in the TOC diagram

COMPANION POWERPOINT

A PowerPoint presentation—4.1 Selecting project purposes and outcomes—accompanies this lesson as a separate file.

SLIDES

SLIDE 2

The TOC Process

The TOC roadmap appears in every session as a means to orient participants about where they are in the process.

SLIDE 3

Which domains of change should we address?

Remember that a TOC should show all the steps that lead to a change for a population as a result of the efforts of many stakeholders working toward a similar goal. Although a number of domains of change may surface during analysis, your organization may elect to not directly address all of them. Your design team will need to set criteria that helps determine which domains the project will address. The first two selection criteria are:

- **Addressing the domain responds to donor interest.** An organization must be able to secure appropriate and sufficient resources to undertake a program strategy.

- **Addressing the domain fills a gap.** Other actors are not currently focused on a domain or, if they are, their efforts to achieve change have not been successful. The extent to which other actors are investing in a particular domain should become apparent through a stakeholder mapping and analysis.

If both criteria are true, consider additional criteria:

- **The domain has high synergy with other domains:** the combined impact of addressing two or more domains is greater than the sum of addressing each domain individually.

- **Addressing a domain maximizes your organization's comparative advantage.** The comparative advantage of an organization refers to the organization's ability, skills, and experience in addressing an issue relative to any other given organization. If Agency A has spent several decades conducting research and implementing gender equality programs in Southeast Asia, one could say that they have a comparative advantage in that area relative to Agency B, who has not conducted or implemented many gender focused programs. On the other hand, Agency B may have multiple

Example: Determining that your project will NOT address a critical outcome

Let's say an organization elects to address the domain of change "improved income." A necessary outcome in that domain's pathway may be "improved market access." If, in the proposed project area, the USAID Feed the Future initiative has been actively trying to improve market access for the past two years and expects to continue these efforts for four more years, the organization would not prioritize this essential outcome for project intervention. Instead, the organization would develop a plan to coordinate with Feed the Future efforts to track progress on this outcome via continuous discussions, without being directly involved in implementation.

livelihoods technical experts in the same region. In which case a domain of "improved livelihoods" would be aligned to Agency B's comparative advantage.

- **Addressing the domain has potential for partnering.** In balance with comparative advantage, a complete TOC depends on partner agencies to address the cross-sectoral and multi-causal linkages.

In FFP-funded Activities, the domains of change that the DFSA agrees to address are now called "Purposes". Those a DFSA will not address remain in the TOC diagram because they are still critical to realizing the goal, but are not referred to as Purposes.

SLIDES 4–5

Which outcomes should we address?

Slide 4: Sometimes a project will address all domains of change in a TOC, but will not directly address all the outcomes in the domain's pathway. This typically happens because an external actor is already attempting to address an outcome.

The risk of not directly addressing every outcome in a pathway is that you must rely on the effectiveness of external actor efforts to achieve the Purpose. Monitoring other actors' progress on the outcome becomes especially critical and is manageable through effective communication and coordination.

Slide 5: Selection criteria for project outcomes are similar to those for project domains of change.

- Addressing the outcome responds to donor interest.
- Addressing the outcome fills a gap. Other agencies are not currently focused on this outcome.
- Addressing the outcome will maximize your organization's comparative advantage.
- The outcome has high synergy with other outcomes.

Addressing the outcome has ***potential for partnering***.

SLIDE 6

External actor outcomes: Use a distinct shape and color

Once you select the domains your project will address, **move to the bottom of each pathway and start to work your way up**, determining which outcomes your organization will attempt to achieve. Make sure that any outcome or domain produced by an external actors is clearly distinguishable from those that the project will aim to achieve. Select a different shape, color, border or text to make these components stand out. If there is room in the shape, specifically name the actor, as demonstrated in the box to the left.

SLIDE 7

Selecting project outcomes. Why start at the bottom?

The reason for starting at the bottom is that your decisions about addressing or not addressing outcomes in the lower tiers of the TOC influences whether your organization can take responsibility for outcomes in the upper tiers. In other words, at some point, the causal logic becomes the determinant of outcome responsibility.

FACILITATOR

This slide demonstrates the selection process via a series of clicks.

First, point out that the domain of change "Gender equitable diverse income increased" now includes the label **Purpose 1**, to reflect that the organization plans to address it. Similarly, the linkage to "Increased adoption optimal MCHN practices" now has a label P2, to reflect another Purpose the organization plans to address.

Next move through the series of clicks, simulating the process of selecting project outcomes.

Click 1: An NGO decides it will address "gender equitable access to entrepreneurial and technical training increased."

Click 2: The NGO does not need to make a decision about whether to address "improved entrepreneurial literacy" or "improved technical skills for off-farm livelihoods" because the logic demonstrates that "gender equitable access to entrepreneurial and technical training increased" is the only precondition for these two outcomes. If they achieve improved access to training, they expect to see achievement in literacy and skills. Thus, the NGO selects both as project outcomes.

Click 3: The same is true for "Reduced rate of business failure" The TOC logic states that the outcome will be achieved if the precondition is achieved. No discussion is necessary about whether or not to take responsibility for these two outcomes, the NGO claims them.

Click 4: We must now move to another pathway tail, and make a decision about "improved linkages to private sector employment and SBE opportunities". In this example, the NGO decides to address this outcome.

EXTERNAL ACTOR: Point out that the NGO determines that an external actor will be responsible for improving access to formal and informal credit. They change the outcome shape and color to clearly distinguish it from the outcomes they will address.

The NGO must now make a decision about whether to take responsibility for "men and women are willing to take investment risk", even though the project will not be addressing all necessary preconditions (e.g., access to financial services). This is a case-by-case decision and will depend on how much change the NGO expects to catalyze by achieving "reduced rate of business failure") AND how confident they are that the external actor will achieve "improved access to formal and informal credit". If they feel secure about both conditions they may elect to "claim" the investment risk outcome as their own. If not, they would need to assign it to an external actor. Then the same conversation will needs to take place about whether they can "claim" the outcome "Increased adoption of off-farm livelihoods". Can they move the needle sufficiently on this outcome by achieving two of three necessary outcomes (improved technical skills and linkages to off-farm opportunities)?

SLIDE 8

External Actor matrix

FFP requests that the TOC Complementary Documentation clearly identify actors outside the activity who are intervening or will intervene to produce outcomes and outputs that are preconditions in a TOC pathway. The Complementary Documentation should also provide information about the scale of external actor intervention relative to the DFSA's coverage, a sense of the likelihood that the preconditions will be achieved by the time they are necessary to stimulate change in the pathway, and risks to the Activity if they are not. Finally, the complementary documentation should describe the activity's level of collaboration with each actor, how that collaboration will better ensure the preconditions, and how the externally produced outputs and outcomes will be monitored.

One way to do this is to create a matrix with a column for the various types of requested information. This slide offers a sample matrix, which is available at www.fsnnetwork.org/theory-change-training-curriculum. Feel free to adapt the sample matrix to suit your needs. Although this curriculum promotes the use of matrices, FFP has no preference for whether DFSAs provide Complementary Documentation on external actors in matrices or written paragraphs.

Small Group Activity 4.1

INTRODUCTION

In this activity, participants will use the criteria discussed to identify domains and outcomes that their organization may address.

Estimated duration: 2 hours

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

This activity will help participants determine roles and responsibilities for TOC outcomes and domains.

COMPANION HANDOUTS AND TOOLS

- Instructions for Activity 4.1.
- Stakeholder mapping matrix in dataset
- Tool: Complementary Documentation matrices

SLIDES

Slides 9-13 replicate the activity instructions.

FACILITATOR

Instructions:

Use the basic selection criteria, as well as any other criteria your group determines necessary, to select domains and outcomes that the project will address. The expertise at your table determines your mock NGO's comparative advantage. The sample stakeholder mapping information in the dataset will help determine where there are gaps to fill. TIP: After selecting the domains your project will address, move to the bottom of each pathway and work your way up, discussing whether you will or will not address each outcome.

On the flipchart, provide a brief explanation of how the criteria resulted in your group selecting various outcomes / domains.

FFP implementers: Once the group identifies domains that the project will address, change the labeling of the selected domains to Purposes and number them, accordingly.

Determine which actors might address any domain or outcome that your project will not attempt to directly influence.

In the TOC diagram, change the shape/color of outcomes that external actors will produce. If room, specify the actor as part of the outcome statement.

Document key implications for TOC success if external actors do not make progress on an outcome as anticipated.

Fill out the External Actor matrix in the Complementary Documentation for at least one actor.

PLENARY SESSION AND GALLERY WALK

FACILITATOR

Select two groups to present for 10–15 minutes. Presentations should include a brief discussion of:

- The process they used to prioritize the domains of change/outcomes their project will address.
- Challenges that surfaced and how the group dealt with them.
- Anticipated challenges and solutions related to tracking progress of external actors' efforts.

Next, have participants conduct a gallery walk, where all groups share their TOC diagrams, and explain what their project will and will not directly address.

Module 4 Session 2: Identify Intervention Outputs

INTRODUCTION

Now that we have determined which outcomes and Purposes our project will be responsible for producing, it is time to identify specific outputs from project interventions that will set the wheels of change in motion.

Estimated duration: 30 minutes

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Session 4.2 will help participants:

- Identify entry points in the TOC for intervention.
- Reflect on criteria for selecting interventions.
- Explore assumptions, risks, rationales, and key questions related to interventions.
- Understand how to insert intervention outputs in a TOC diagram

COMPANION POWERPOINT

A PowerPoint presentation—4.2 Identify Intervention Outputs—accompanies this lesson as a separate file.[22]

COMPANION HANDOUTS AND TOOLS

- Handout 4.2a Critical Questions for Interventions
- Tool 4.2 Outcomes Interventions template is located on participants' USB drive

SLIDES

SLIDE 2

The TOC Process

The TOC roadmap appears in every session as a means to orient participants about where they are in the process.

SLIDES 3-5

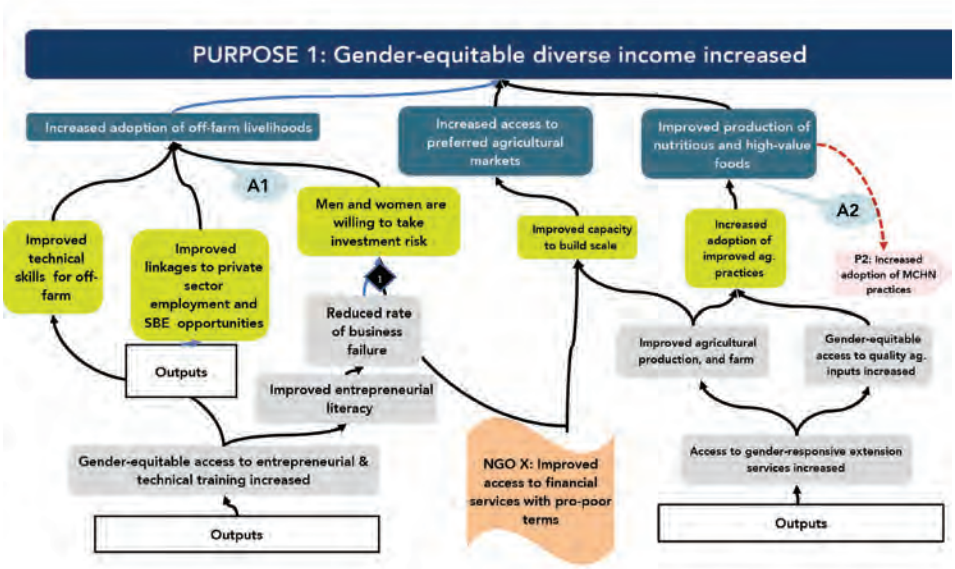
Which outcomes need an intervention?

Not every outcome in the TOC requires an intervention. Some outcomes are "actionable" and, thus, require an intervention; others are simply the result of

22 Access the most current PowerPoint slides and handouts at www.fsnnetwork.org/theory-change-training-curriculum.

achieving the preconditions that come before them in the pathway. In the example below, we need interventions to set the wheels of change in motion and achieve the outcomes *"gender-equitable access to entrepreneurial & technical training increased"*. However, the next outcomes in the pathway, *"improved technical skills for off-farm livelihoods" and "improved entrepreneurial literacy"* require no intervention. The training access precondition is what sets the wheels of change in motion. If we achieve this precondition, and evidence points to no other main causes contributing to either outcome above, our theory states we will achieve both outcomes related to skills and literacy.

At this stage, we typically find actionable outcomes in the lowest tiers of the TOC diagram—they are the tails of pathways. In other words, they have no preconditions / arrows leading to them.



FACILITATOR

Ask participants to identify the outcomes that need an intervention on Slide 4. Slide 5 provides answers. Then in plenary, spend 5-10 minutes briefly reviewing one or two group's diagrams and ask participants to point out actionable outcomes.

SLIDES 6-12

Selecting Interventions

Slide 6: If you have followed the process thoroughly and rigorously to this point, the menu of potential interventions will be significantly reduced because **the first selection criteria is that the intervention must have a clear and logical link to at least one outcome presented in the TOC diagram.** If a proposed intervention does not have a logical link to an outcome in the TOC, it is not a priority and thus, should not be included.

Slide 7: Choosing the best intervention for any given cause requires a good list of options and alternatives. Ideas for interventions can come from many places. While creativity and an open mind are both important, options should also have a basis in evidence and experience. Sources for potential interventions include:

- Input from communities on desired activities.
- Best practices (including latest assessments).
- Lessons learned from previous projects (including evaluation reports).
- Individual and institutional experiences.
- Ideas from reviewing research and secondary literature.

Slide 8: Once the team proposes a number of intervention options, the next step is to examine and select which ones the project will implement. The selection process can be as simple as arriving at group consensus or as complicated as applying decision tools to make the choice. Regardless of how a team ultimately arrives at selecting an intervention, it is critical to:

- Develop criteria on which to base decisions.
- List the assumptions and rationales related to the connections between interventions and the outcomes you expect them to generate.
- Identify any risks associated with the intervention (do-no-harm approach).
- Ask critical questions: what else do we need to know? What is already in place?

Slide 9: Develop Criteria
Some possible selection criteria include:

- Evidence showing that an intervention produces the anticipated result in the proposed context
- Sustainable
- Integration across technical sectors
- Community support, social acceptability, political sensitivity
- Extent to which it builds on existing capacities and opportunities
- Level of risk
- Required management support
- Technical feasibility, institutional capacity, and potential for partnering
- Cost effectiveness

This is not a comprehensive list of criteria for selecting interventions, but it is a starting point. You should always consider the assumptions, risks, critical questions, and local context when narrowing down and finally deciding on interventions.

FACILITATOR

Ask participants to share other criteria they commonly apply when selecting interventions.

Slide 10: List assumptions/ rationales related to the connection between interventions and outcomes.

As discussed in Session 3.2, there always will be assumptions about the connection between particular interventions and the outcomes we expect them to generate. Some will be external assumptions; conditions important to achieving a particular outcome, but completely outside the project's control. Others will be internal assumptions—conditions important to achieving a particular outcome, which are in our control (e.g., people's willingness to adopt a new practice). When we have evidence to support certain assumptions that explain why we believe our efforts will result in a particular outcome, we can document them as rationales.

As we consider which interventions to promote, we need to explore all types of assumptions in order to select the most promising ones.[23]

Questions to help identify assumptions:

What makes us confident that if we implement "intervention X" we will achieve "outcome Y"?

Are these factors completely outside the control of our project? Are these factors that we can influence? Do we have evidence demonstrating this link?

Are we taking anything for granted related to the political, environmental, or social context?

Are we taking anything for granted about other stakeholders and their capacities?

Slide 11: Ask Critical Questions.

All project design requires consideration of **critical questions**. Critical questions help your team determine the appropriateness of the initiatives you propose. Critical questions differ from assumptions in that they should lead to team actions as part of the design.

Some questions will comprehensively ask about the set of initiatives, for example:

- Do interventions fit in with the government's overall development strategy? How do they fit in with donors' strategies? If the proposed initiatives do not fit government or major donor strategies, what approaches can we develop to bring these entities on board?
- Do proposed responses enhance positive strategies (e.g., asset maximizing or risk reduction strategies), currently implemented by households and communities? Do they fill gaps?

23 At this stage, it is important ask the questions and document responses, in order to prioritize which interventions the project will implement. Later in the process, we will discuss how to depict them in the TOC diagram.

Other questions might be specific to one intervention within the project. For example, if you are designing a project to address poor soil health and have determined that a key action will be to plant nitrogen fixing plants, a critical question could be, "Is a steady, and preferably local, supply of seeds for nitrogen fixing plants available?" It is NOT appropriate to list "steady supply of local seeds" as an assumption. Either the supply exists or it does not. If it does not exist, you must identify a different source of seeds or the project must incorporate plans to fill that gap in the supply chain.

Other examples:
- If land is limited, can livestock activities be implemented and, if so, how?
- How will the project train populations with limited education and literacy?

Direct participants to the Handout 4.2a Critical Questions for Interventions

FACILITATOR

Additional critical questions to determine the appropriateness of interventions include:

- Do proposed responses build on the strengths and opportunities that exist in communities?
- How will diverse technical sectors within our organization work together to address the TOC Purposes?
- If we recommend new initiatives, does our organization presently have the skilled staff to take on such initiatives? If not, where will the staff and resources come from?
- Are partners needed to implement the project activities? How will we select these partners? What (if any) additional institutional capacity development is necessary to improve partner performance? What are the constraints to successful partnerships?
- Is there a niche that presently is not filled for which our organization can obtain donor funding? Does this activity fit with our organization's strategic plan or mission?

This is not an exhaustive list of questions. Many variables determine which questions to ask.

Slide 12: List Risks Related to Interventions.
Risks related to interventions can be directly related to assumptions. For example, what might happen if your assumptions do not hold? Risks additionally include external conditions that have some probability of

negatively affecting the link between the intervention and the outcome. Risks also include unintended consequences that result from project interventions. For example, efforts to improve gender equality might result in increased domestic violence or efforts to encourage farmers to diversify crops might result in market saturation and low prices. When selecting interventions, make sure to explore the risk of creating new inequalities, disincentive effects, or other unintended consequences.

SLIDE 13

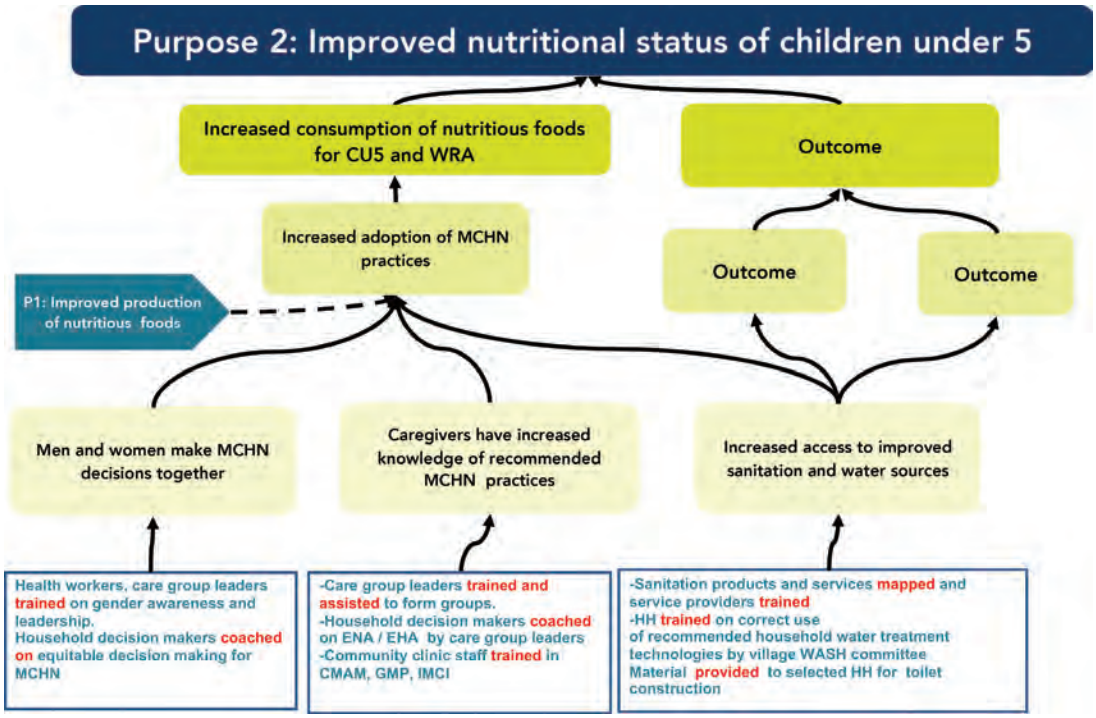
Target Groups

As we prioritize which interventions to promote, we must consider the groups of people that must necessarily be engaged in order to achieve the change desired among the impact population groups. For example, to deal with issues related to absence of women's rights, groups of men must be part of the target group for various interventions. For an outcome related to improved childhood nutrition, interventions must target caregivers of young children.

SLIDES 14-15

Inserting intervention outputs in the TOC diagram

After selecting the most appropriate interventions, determine the immediate product of each intervention—the output. Frame each output as a result,



making sure to identify specific target groups. For example, if we decide that the most efficient, effective way to improve the health and nutritional knowledge of health care staff is by offering them training in growth monitoring and promotion (GMP), community-based management of acute malnutrition (CMAM), and integrated management of childhood illness (IMCI), our output will be: *community clinic staff trained in CMAM, GMP, and IMCI*. Notice how the output statement specifies a target group.

The next step is to insert the outputs into the TOC diagram, using a different color shape, text, or other means to differentiate outputs from outcomes.

SLIDE 16

Assumptions and Rationales

As always, review the plausibility of the causal logic each time there is a new addition to the TOC.

Practitioners implementing FFP DFSAs should add to the TOC diagram any *external* assumptions identified earlier that apply to output-to-outcome linkages. We do not need to add internal assumptions to the TOC diagram, but we should document them as some part of the M&E plan. Also, add rationales that help explain the causal logic to the TOC diagram, specifically those that adhere to the criteria described in Session 3.2, Slide 18: Output-to-outcome linkages.

Support new assumptions and rationales in the TOC Complementary Documentation.

Small Group Activity 4.2

Estimated duration: 1.5 hours

INTRODUCTION

This activity gives participants the opportunity to select appropriate interventions for relevant outcomes, frame them as output results, and add them, and any associated assumptions or rationales to the TOC diagram.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

This activity will help participants think critically about how to operationalize the TOC.

COMPANION HANDOUT

Handout 4.2a Critical Questions for Interventions

FACILITATOR

Instructions:

1. Identify all TOC outcomes that require an intervention (those that do not have any preconditions).
2. Brainstorm potential interventions for these outcomes and use selection criteria (Handout 4.2a) to choose the most appropriate responses.
3. Note assumptions, rationales, critical questions, and risks in Tool 4.2
4. Frame the output of each intervention as a result, making sure to identify specific target groups (e.g., community clinic staff trained in CMAM, GMP, and IMCI).
5. Insert each output into the TOC diagram, using a different color shape, text, or other means of to differentiate it from outcomes.
6. Insert any rationales or external assumptions into the TOC diagram using the same color and shape you used earlier for both components.

FACILITATOR

There may not be sufficient time in the workshop for participants to identify interventions for all actionable outcomes in the TOC. If time is constrained, ask the groups to select four or five outcomes that require intervention.

Module 4 Session 3: Refining the TOC

Estimated duration: 15 minutes

INTRODUCTION

In the final stages, we need to make the TOC diagram easily readable for those who have not been as close to the process as those who develop it.

COMPANION POWERPOINT

A PowerPoint presentation—4.3 Refining TOC diagram—accompanies this lesson as a separate file.

COMPANION HANDOUT

Handout 4.3 TOC key

SLIDES

SLIDE 1

Make the TOC diagram legible

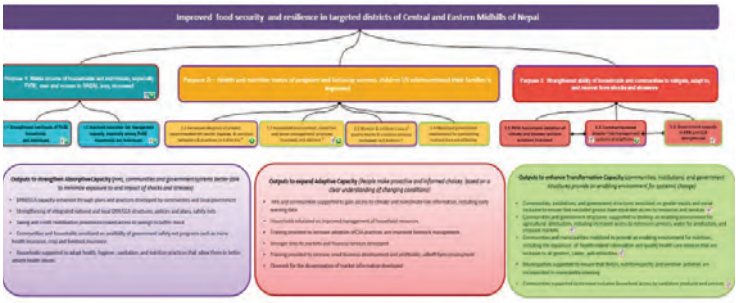
As mentioned earlier, the complex, multi-sectoral, holistic nature of a DFSA TOC, often results in a diagram that will not fit legibly on one page. Use as many pages as needed to convey the level of detail necessary to build a common understanding of how your team expects change to occur. FFP Activities are required to display each Purpose a distinct page; you may even break it down further and create a diagram for each sub-purpose. What is most critical is that you keep the diagram reader-friendly and clearly show linkages in pathways that extend across separate pages.

SLIDE 2

Single page summary

If you are developing the TOC for a FFP-funded project, you will need to submit a single-page, summary diagram, in addition to detailed diagrams for each Purpose. The summary page contains at minimum, the goal, the purposes, the sub-purposes, and the primary intervention outputs that we expect will catalyze change. The one page summary might also include a pared-down set of boxes that collectively represents all the outcomes for which you provide detail on individual pages and notes directing the reader to detail on individual pages.

Sample one page diagram
Save the Children—SABAL DFSA in Nepal



It is hard to see detail on Slide 2, but that is not the intended function of the example. Use this slide solely to demonstrate the simplicity of a 1-page overview diagram.

FACILITATOR

SLIDES 4-5

Differentiate TOC Components

Use distinct colors, shapes, borders, icons, text, and other graphic elements to differentiate TOC components and crosscutting issues.

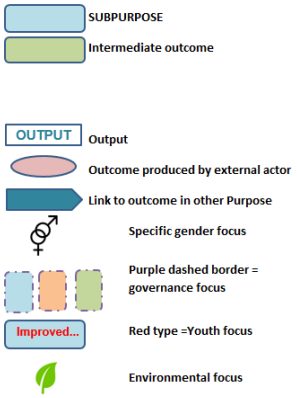
If you are developing the TOC for a FFP-funded DFSA, if can be very helpful to shade each outcome level a different color. In addition to aiding readability, shading by levels makes it easier to transfer the TOC to a logframe. To do this, start by shading the Purposes a distinct color. Next shade only the outcomes that directly feed into the purposes (an arrow directly links them). These will become sub-purposes. Then move to the next level, and repeat. Because a TOC is not a linear model, do not be surprised if the various levels do not line up horizontally the way they might in a results framework. What is most important is the order of arrows that connect each component, not the physical location (upper or lower tiers of the diagram).

Some FFP partners find it helpful to use a distinct color scheme for each Purpose. The scheme applies only to the Purpose, sub-purposes, and outcomes, including cross-purpose linkages (but not assumptions and rationales). For example, Purpose 1 might use varying shades of blue, Purpose 2 varying shades of red, and Purpose 3 varying shades of yellow. This provides an easy visual cue for demonstrating cross-purpose linkages.

FACILITATOR

It is hard to see detail on Slide 5, but that is not the intended function of the example. Use this slide solely to point out how the FFP partner used varying shades of red for the Purpose, sub-purpose and outcomes and how the blue and yellow linkages to Purposes 1 & 2 clearly stand out.

Handout 4.3



SLIDE 6

Include a Key

Be sure to include a key that describes the coding and include that key on every page of the TOC diagram. Handout 4.3 offers some examples, but these are not hard-fast rules. Code in a way that makes sense for your TOC diagram.

Small Group Activity 4.3

INTRODUCTION

In this activity, participants will use distinct colors, shapes, borders, text, and other graphic elements to differentiate TOC components and create a key that describes the coding.

Estimated duration: 45 minutes

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

This activity will help participants make the TOC diagram more legible for readers who have not been involved in its development.

COMPANION HANDOUT

Instructions for Activity 4.3.

FACILITATOR

Instructions:

1. Make sure each level of the TOC is shaded a distinct color (e.g., Purpose, sub-purpose, outcomes).
2. Make sure outcomes produced by external actors, assumptions, and rationales stand out in shape and or color.
3. Make sure linkages across TOC pages are clear.
4. Use shading, borders, text or other graphic elements to highlight any other distinct features in the diagram (e.g., gender integration, environmental awareness, youth-focus, etc.
5. Create a key for all color and shape coding and include it on every page of the TOC diagram.

Works Referenced in Module 4

Starr, L., S. Nelson, and T. Spangler. 2013. *Livelihoods and Disaster Risk Reduction*. Module 3: Program Design. TANGO International and Florida International University.

USAID'S Office of Food for Peace. 2016. Policy and Guidance for Monitoring, Evaluation, and Reporting for Development Food Security Activities. Chapter 2, Section 2.1. Washington, DC: USAID.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES TO GUIDE INTERVENTION SELECTION

Maxwell, D. and H. Stobaugh. 2012. Response Analysis: What Drives Program Choice? Feinstein International Center. Available at: fic.tufts.edu/publication-item/response-analysis-what-drives-program-choice/

Oxfam. 2008. *Rough Guides to Emergency Food Security & Livelihoods Programmes: Response Analysis.* London: Oxfam GB.

Stern, M. L. Jones-Renaud, and M. Hillesland. 2016. Intervention Guide for the Women's Empowerment in Agriculture Index (WEAI). Washington, DC: ACDI/VOCA and USAID.

USAID. 2013. Land Tenure and Property Rights. Situation Assessment and Intervention Planning Tool. Available at: www.usaidlandtenure.net/sites/default/files/USAID_Land_Tenure_Situation_Assessment_and_Intervention_Planning_Tool.pdf (Recommended excerpt: Chapter 5.)

MODULE 5: MAKING THE THEORY OF CHANGE TESTABLE & USING THE THEORY OF CHANGE

About Module 5

OVERVIEW

Module 5 builds on previous modules. Module 1 provided an overview of the TOC process, and covered conceptual frameworks. In Module 2, participants practiced using causal analysis to create a problem tree. In Module 3, the focus shifted to solutions, including drafting a goal, identifying domains of change and their corresponding pathways, and articulating assumptions and rationales. In Module 4, participants determined who specifically will take responsibility for various domains of change and outcomes (their project or external actors), identified specific project interventions to set the wheels of change in motion, and made their TOC diagram more reader-friendly.

We are nearing the end of the process. Final steps include 1) making the TOC testable by selecting indicators that tell us how to recognize success at each step in the pathways, and, if implementing a FFP-funded project, 2) transferring the TOC to a logframe; and 3) completing the TOC Complementary Documentation.

The final workshop sessions use plenary discussion to explore participants' ideas about how they will use a TOC in their daily work throughout the program cycle.

The objectives of Module 5 are to help participants:

- Learn how to transfer the TOC a logistical framework (logframe) if necessary.
- Identify effective indicators for each TOC component.
- Understand what to include in the TOC Complementary Documentation for FFP-funded DFSAs.
- Discuss how to use the TOC to reflect, learn, and adapt within the program cycle.

STRUCTURE AND WORKLOAD

Module 5 is composed of three facilitator-led presentations. The module's specific set of objectives are reinforced through interactive plenary sessions, group activities and presentations, and Q&A with the facilitator.

Module 5 Session 1: TOC Metrics and Transfer to Logframe

Estimated duration: 30 minutes

INTRODUCTION

Once we have a plausible and feasible TOC, we need to make sure it is testable. Identifying metrics for the majority of components in the TOC provides a means to recognize that change has occurred.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Session 5.1 will help participants learn how to transfer a TOC to a FFP M&E logframe and understand criteria for selecting effective indicators for TOC components.

COMPANION POWERPOINT

A PowerPoint presentation—5.1 Indicators and Logframe—accompanies this lesson as a separate file.[24]

COMPANION HANDOUTS

Provide the following printed handout along with the lesson.

- Handout 5.1a FFP Indicators
- Three additional resources are available on the USB:
- Handout 5.1b Ideal characteristics of indicators
- Handout 5.1d USAID FFP baseline final indicators
- Handout 5.1e USAID FFP annual monitoring indicators Sept 2018

SLIDES

SLIDE 2

The TOC Process

The TOC roadmap appears in every session as a means to orient participants about where they are in the process.

24 Access the most current PowerPoint slides and handouts at www.fsnnetwork.org/theory-change-training-curriculum.

SLIDES 3-12

Transferring the TOC to the Logframe

This set of slides first distinguishes TOCs from logframes and then shares some helpful tips on how to summarize the TOC in the logframe. Although transferring a systems-thinking model that demonstrates multiple examples of crosscutting causal logic into a structured, linear matrix may seem like stuffing an octopus into a pigeonhole, there a few simple steps you can take to make this transfer easier.

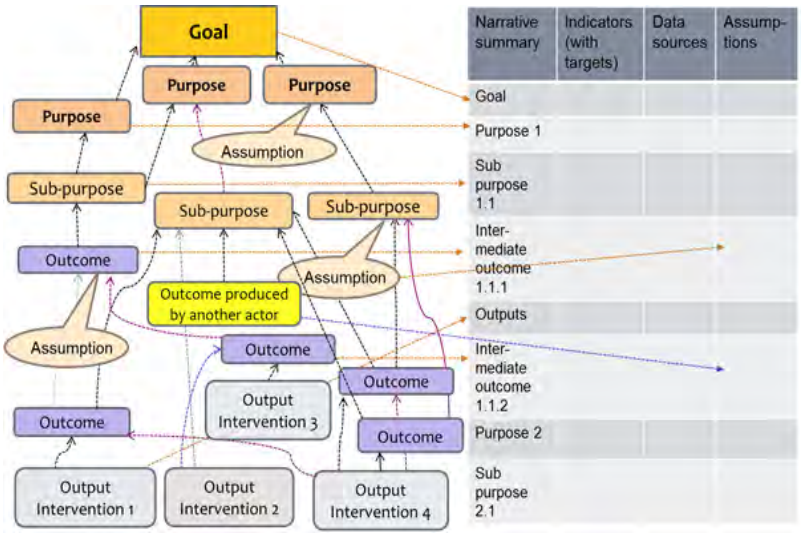
Slide 4: Theory of Change versus Logframe

A logframe is different from, but complementary to, a TOC diagram. Key differences between a TOC and a logframe include

A Theory of Change	A Logframe
provides a broad view of a problem, including all the domains and pathways necessary to reach a long-term goal	only includes outcomes that a project is directly responsible for achieving.
is non-linear, with many cross-sectoral linkages, and can be adapted to changing circumstances	is linear and structured and typically does not change over the life of the project.
describes in detail the external assumptions and rationales that help explain linkages and supports them with evidence,	lists assumptions, as well as indicators with targets, and potential data sources for each indicator in a standard, structured matrix.
is used to look at the big picture and all the interconnected influences necessary to reach an overarching goal. It is an excellent tool to help project teams reflect, learn, and adapt activities.	primarily provides a framework for the M&E system to assure accountability. It is one way implementers show donors how they will track performance.

Slide 5 demonstrates FFP's expectations of where to transfer TOC components to the FFP logframe. Note that the yellow shape (an outcome produced by an external actor) transfers to the assumptions column. We include external actor efforts as assumptions because we *assume* the external actor will achieve what they intend to achieve, however our project has no control over whether they do or do not.

Slide 5



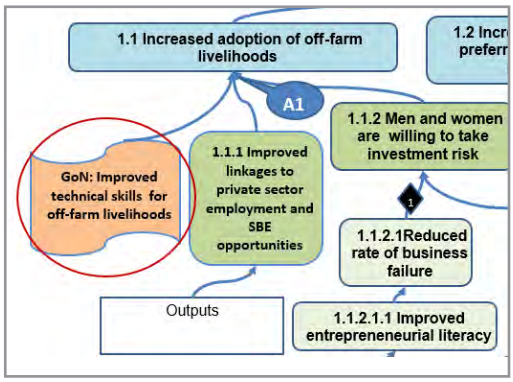
USAID, 2016

Slides 6-10 explain helpful tips for executing this transfer. The first step is simply to save an electronic copy of the TOC diagram, specifically for numbering outcomes using a logframe format (1.1, 1.2, 1.3, etc.). Start with one Purpose and number only the outcomes that *directly* feed into that Purpose (those directly linked by an arrow). These outcomes will become sub-purposes. Then move to the next level below and number only the outcomes that directly feed into one sub-purpose. Repeat the process for each sub-purpose. Because a TOC is not a linear model, do not be surprised if the various levels do not line up horizontally the way they might in a results framework. What is most important is the hierarchical order of preconditions, not the physical space (high or low in the diagram) where a component is located. For now, do not number the cross-purpose linkages. We'll do that once all Purpose numbering is complete.

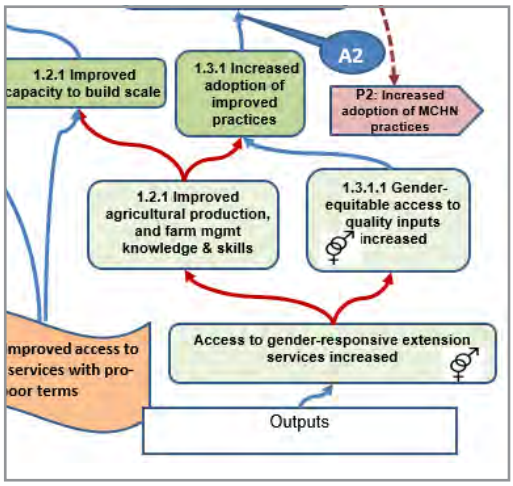
Slide 7: Do not number outcomes produced by other actors. As mentioned earlier, these transfer to the assumptions column. We will review this process in detail shortly.

Slide 8: Often one outcome is a precondition for several outcomes. Numbering these 'multiple contributors' using a logframe format can be confusing. Try to reach consensus among your team about if a 'multiple pathway contributor' primarily contributes to one outcome path or another and

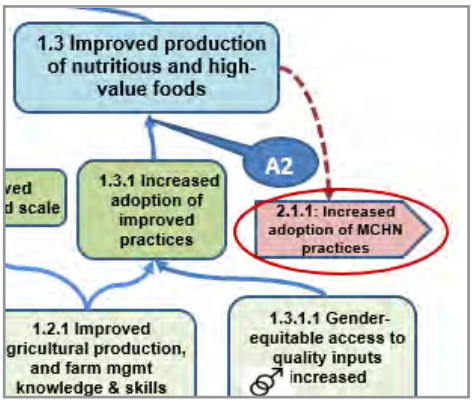
Slide 7



Slide 8



Slide 9



number it accordingly. If all things are equal, simply pick one path. You will have the opportunity to note the contributions to multiple pathways in the logframe notes.

Slide 9: Once all the levels of the TOC are numbered, re-number all the cross-purpose linkages. Earlier we gave them a generic Purpose number (e.g. P2), now we want to direct users to the specific outcome in P2 (e.g. 2.1.1).

Slides 10-12: After numbering is complete, begin to enter the TOC components into the logframe in the same hierarchy as displayed in the TOC diagram and using the same wording. For multiple pathway contributors, make a small note in the Logframe Narrative column. *For example, 1.2.1. Improved agricultural production and farm management knowledge and skills (also contributes to 1.3.1).*

Enter an assumption in the logframe row of the outcome for which it is a precondition.

Outcomes produced by external actors are also entered in the assumptions column of the logframe, because we assume (based on credible data sources) that the other actor will be successful in achieving their efforts. Your project may do its best to influence the other actors' achievement, but ultimately, it is out of project control. In the assumptions column, phrase external actor outcomes as they relate to achievement (e.g., Feed the Future efforts will increase market access as projected).

SLIDES 13-14

Identify Indicators for TOC Components

TOC indicators are signposts of change**.** They provide a reliable means to tell us how to recognize success at each step in the TOC pathways. TOC indicators can be quantitative OR qualitative variables, factors, or other measure that verify whether an intended change actually occurred.

SLIDE 15

Types and levels of Indicators

An **impact indicator** measures the highest level of change your project is responsible for bringing about. An **outcome indicator** measures the change in systems or behaviors. **Output indicators** measure implementation. They track the goods and services produced by the project interventions.

SLIDES 16-18

Selecting Indicators for the TOC

Start by taking required FFP Baseline and Annual indicators (handouts 5.1d and 5.1e on the USB) and exploring how they overlay your TOC diagram. Begin with the indicators that are required for all FFP-funded activities and map them to your TOC diagram. Next, determine which of the FFP "Required if Applicable" indicators are applicable to your Activity and map these to relevant outcomes. Use some type of coding to distinguish baseline/ final indicators from Annual monitoring indicators.

After you map all applicable FFP indicators, start at the bottom of the TOC diagram and identify all outputs that do not have indicators. Next, rigorously move up each pathway and identify

A) **Outcomes that do not have any OUTCOME indicator** (output indicators are not sufficient to document change for outcomes);
B) **Outcomes for which change is only captured by baseline and endline surveys** executed by a third party. Many of the required baseline/ endline indicators measure changes that your activity needs to track before the final year. For example, any indicators related to adoption of practices, changes in decision-making, etc.
C) **Outcomes that do not have sufficient indicators to measure change:** For example, the FFP annual monitoring indicator *" Percent of households with soap and water at a handwashing station commonly used by family members"* is an appropriate measure for the outcome " *Improved WASH strategies are effectively employed by households"*, but alone it is not sufficient to measure outcome achievement.

In order to recognize success at each step in the TOC pathways, devise some type of indicator to fill these gaps, so that you are able to understand if change is occurring as predicted, and while there is still time to redirect implementation, if necessary. Indicators do not necessarily need to be quantitative factors obtained through annual surveys. As mentioned, indicators may be qualitative factors, or other measures that provide objective, factual evidence.

Characteristics of Good Indicators

- **Measureable** by the use of specific quantifiable variables and/or through other factual, objective evidence obtained through qualitative methods.
- **Technically feasible:** capable of being assessed or measured with the skills available.
- **Reliable:** Conclusions based on these indicators should be verifiable or objective if measured by different people, at different times, and under varying circumstances.
- **Valid:** capable of measuring the phenomena.
- **Relevant** to project objectives at the appropriate level in the hierarchy.
- **Sensitive** to changes in the situation being observed.
- **Cost-effective:** information obtained should be worth the time and money involved to procure it.
- **Timely:** It should be possible to collect, analyze, and report the data in a reasonable time.

SLIDE 19

Criteria for Deciding WHAT to Measure

When deciding what to measure for each indicator, consider the following.

- **Balance needed information versus useful information:** Make sure selected indicators actually measure something that you can reliably use to demonstrate progress toward outcomes. While certain information may be useful for project planning, it may not be the type of information needed to determine outcome achievement.
- **Data that have the most potential to redirect action:** identify indicators that will enable a continual review of changes in TOC dynamics, such that projects can reevaluate and/or affirm implementation activities.
- **Balance the need to know versus the ability to find out:** In order to measure progress, you must actually be able to collect data on the chosen indicators. If data collection is too difficult, it may hinder efforts to determine project progress.
- **Context of the situation, problem, and underlying causes:** Indicators should be appropriate and relevant to the cultural, socioeconomic, and geographic context.

SLIDE 20

Documenting Indicators

Document indicators in the logframe. FFP-funded DFSAs are not required to insert indicators in the TOC diagram, however; some practitioners find it very useful to have an internal version of the TOC diagram that includes the indicators.

FFP requires each purpose, sub-purpose, outcome, and output transferred to the logframe to have a quantitative or qualitative indicator.

SUMMARY OF KEY CONCEPTS

The TOC and a logframe are distinct, but complementary tools for project design, monitoring, and evaluation.

Indicators are critical to the TOC because they give us a measure of achievement at each step in the pathways.

Small Group Activity 5.1

INTRODUCTION

This activity gives participants the opportunity to transfer a TOC to a logframe, map FFP indicators to TOC components, identify remaining measurement gaps, and craft indicators to fill those gaps.

Estimated duration:
2 hour activity

30 minutes group presentation

COMPANION HANDOUTS AND TOOLS

- Instructions for Activity 5.1
- Tool 5.1 logframe is located on participant's USB drive

SLIDES

Slides 22-26 replicate the activity instructions.

FACILITATOR

Instructions:

Numbering TOC and Transferring to Logframe (2 person team)
Numbering (1 person completes this steps while the other transfers #s to logframe)

1. Start with one purpose and number only the outcomes that directly feed into that purpose. These are your sub-purposes.
2. Number only the outcomes that directly feed into one sub-purpose.
3. Do not number outcomes produced by other actors
4. Repeat the process for each sub-purpose in the selected Purpose until all outcomes that the project will produce are numbered.
5. If time, repeat steps 1- 4 for each Purpose. Once all Purpose pathways are numbered, re-number all the cross-purpose linkages.
6. When one outcome is a precondition for several outcomes above, try to reach consensus among your team about which outcome stream it primarily contributes to and number it accordingly. If all things are equal, pick one path or the other. You will have the opportunity to note the multiple pathway contributions in logframe notes.

Transferring (1 person completes this steps while the other numbers the TOC diagram)

1. Open Tool 5.1 on your USB.

2. Begin to enter the TOC components into the logframe in the same hierarchy as displayed in the TOC diagram. Use the exact same wording and numbering.

3. When you have entered the entire pathway that explains Purpose 1, move on to Purpose 2, following that pathway all the way down to Outputs.

4. Enter assumptions in the last column of the logframe. Enter an assumption on the same logframe row as the outcome for which it is a precondition.

5. For all outcomes produced by external actors, enter an assumption in the logframe stating they will achieve the outcome we expect them to produce.

6. For outcomes that are preconditions for more than one outcome above, make a small note in the logframe narrative column. For example, 1.1.2. Gender-equitable access to entrepreneurial & technical training increased (also contributes to 1.1.1.1)

Selecting indicators (3-4 person team)

1. Project your TOC diagram on the wall.

2. First, use Handouts 5.1a (and 5.1d and 5.1e on the USB) to identify required and "required if applicable" FFP indicators that are relevant to your Activity.

3. Map all of them onto the projected TOC diagram.

4. Choose one pathway identify all outputs that do not have an indicator. On the projected diagram, put a sticky note over them as a reminder that there is a gap.

5. Move rigorously up the pathway and identify:
   –Outcomes that do not have any OUTCOME indicator
   –Outcomes for which change is only captured by baseline & endline surveys.
   –Outcomes that do not have sufficient indicators to measure change

6. If time permits, choose several of the outcomes with indicator gaps and craft strong indicators for them. Make sure to identify the target population for the indicator if it differs from the impact population.

7. Coordinate with the logframe team to enter indicators in the last column of the logframe.

PRESENTATION

Select two groups to present their TOC diagram with mapped FFP indicators and logframe.

FACILITATOR

Resources to Guide Indicator Selection

USAID Bureau of Democracy, Conflict, and Humanitarian Assistance Office of Food for Peace. 2015. *FFP Indicators list*. Washington, DC. Available at: www.fsnnetwork.org/usaid-office-food-peace-ffp-indicators

USAID Bureau of Democracy, Conflict, and Humanitarian Assistance Office of Food for Peace. 2015. FFP Indicators Handbook. *Part I Indicators for Baseline and Final Evaluation Surveys*. Washington, DC. Available at: www.fsnnetwork.org/usaid-office-food-peace-ffp-indicators

USAID Bureau of Democracy, Conflict, and Humanitarian Assistance Office of Food for Peace. 2015. FFP Indicators Handbook. *Part II Annual Monitoring Indicators*. Washington, DC. Available at: www.fsnnetwork.org/usaid-office-food-peace-ffp-indicators

USAID'S Office of Food for Peace. 2016. Policy and Guidance for Monitoring, Evaluation, and Reporting for Development Food Security Activities. Washington, DC: USAID.

Module 5 Session 2: Theory of Change Complementary Documentation

INTRODUCTION

This session describes what should be included in the TOC Complementary Documentation—the final component of the TOC product, which communicates information that is not easily interpreted from the TOC diagram.[25] [26]

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Participants will understand how to explain information in the TOC Complementary Documentation that is not easily communicated in the diagram.

COMPANION POWERPOINT

A PowerPoint presentation—5.2 TOC Complementary Documentation—accompanies this lesson as a separate file.[27]

COMPANION TOOLS

Complementary documentation matrices

Estimated duration: 15 minutes

SLIDES

SLIDE 2
The TOC Process

The TOC roadmap appears in every session as a means to orient participants about where they are in the process.

FACILITATOR

Explain that there is not time to draft a complete Complementary Documentation in this workshop. The session is purely informational.

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25 This session draws heavily from guidance in USAID'S Office of Food for Peace. 2016 Policy and Guidance for Monitoring, Evaluation, and Reporting for Development Food Security Activities. Section 2.1.4

26 The FFP Policy and Guidance for Monitoring, Evaluation, and Reporting for DFSAs uses the term "TOC Narrative" to reference all additional information that is not easily displayed in the TOC diagrams. Moving forward, FFP will adopt the term "complementary documentation" to reference this body of evidence and supporting information. The change is in response to a substantial body of feedback highlighting that the term "TOC narrative" was misleading—FFP does not require or desire a narration of the TOC logic.

27 Access the most current PowerPoint slides and handouts at www.fsnnetwork.org/theory-change-training-curriculum.

SLIDE 3

What is the Purpose of the TOC Complementary Documentation?

The purpose of the TOC Complementary Documentation is to explain information to users that is not easily communicated in a graphic. Use the Complementary Documentation to convey the degree of certainty that change will unfold as depicted in the TOC diagram and to outline conditions that could threaten progress along the TOC pathways. Do not use the TOC Complementary Documentation to summarize what is obvious in the TOC diagram.

SLIDE 4

What to include in the TOC Complementary Documentation

- Details related to external assumptions
- Articulation of and supporting evidence for rationales
- Details on the efforts of external actors
- Explanation of how the activity addresses cross-cutting areas
- Explanation of how the activity will result in population-level change
- A number of practitioners find that it is most efficient to use matrices to convey this information, but it is also possible to share the text, web links, and references in paragraph form. FFP has no preference on how you convey the information as long as it is conveyed clearly.

SLIDES 5-8

TOPS sample matrices for complementary documentation

This set of slides offers matrix samples for the complementary documentation. The matrices are available at www.fsnnetwork.org/theory-change-training-curriculum. Please feel free to alter them to meet your needs. Many practitioners who use Excel to create their TOC diagram find it efficient to also use Excel for the complementary documentation matrices. This allows projects to keep all the information in one file, rather than bouncing back and forth between Excel and Word documents.

SLIDE 9

Complementary documentation & population-based changes

FFP requests that you provide an explanation of how the activity assumes an intervention with a limited number of beneficiaries will result in population-level change. If it is difficult to demonstrate the intent to catalyze population-level changes in the TOC diagram, use the complementary documentation to add details.

You may elect to explain interventions that you expect to self-replicate, how you will broadcast knowledge across the whole population or how you will use participants as agents of change.

Module 5 Session 3: Using the Theory of Change throughout the Program Cycle

INTRODUCTION

This final session discusses a few ways we can use this valuable product throughout the program cycle. Finally, in this session, participants will explore how they envision using a TOC in their daily work.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

This session will help participants to understand how to use the TOC at various stages in the program cycle

COMPANION POWERPOINT

A PowerPoint presentation—5.3 Using the Theory of Change—accompanies this lesson as a separate file.

Estimated duration: 30 minutes

COMPANION HANDOUT

Theory of Change Checklist
Handout 5.3

SLIDES

SLIDE 3

How do we know if the theory of change is adequate?

A TOC is adequate when it provides a logical and coherent explanation of how to address the major underlying barriers to change and when it specifies the major required areas of change with special attention to the structural dimensions.

The change demonstrated in the diagram must be:

- **Plausible:** Offers logical evidence-based pathways that demonstrate how we expect change to occur
- **Feasible:** Identifies realistic means of initiating change.
- **Testable:** Clearly outlines how to measure change

SLIDE 4

TOC Checklist: A tool for determining quality and completeness of TOCs for FFP DFSAs.

In 2017, The TOPS Program and FFP collaborated to develop the TOC Checklist, a tool that allows TOC developers and reviewers to ascertain the quality and thoroughness of the diagrams and Complementary Documentation. The checklist is a summary of FFP criteria outlined in document "USAID'S Office of Food for Peace Policy and Guidance for Monitoring, Evaluation, and Reporting for Development Food Security Activities", and explained in detail in the TOPS TOC training materials. You can access the checklist in English and French at www.fsnnetwork.org/theory-change-training-curriculum

SLIDES 5-6

What Next?

How do we make sure that creating a TOC is not just an exercise to satisfy the donor? How can we use the TOC to stimulate processes that engage implementing staff? How can we encourage staff to continue to use the TOC diagram throughout the program cycles as a tool for learning, reflecting, and adapting?

After creating the TOC diagram, plan to use the TOC as the foundation for project design, implementation, and evaluation. Use it throughout the program cycle as a tool for learning, reflecting, and adapting. Finally, be sure to review and refine the TOC at minimum on an annual basis as you learn more about the context and the processes of change in an implementation area.

SLIDES 7-10

Using a Theory of Change to Learn, Reflect, & Adapt in the Design Phase

FACILITATOR

Slides 7-10 can be skipped if participants have been through the full 5-day curriculum (they will be redundant). The slides are relevant when Session 5.3 is a stand-alone presentation.

Slide 7: TOCs should form the foundation of project strategies and design**.** Similar to other development hypotheses, TOCs create the vision for change and communicate the need for change. In many cases, a TOC is better able to articulate the specifics of how change will occur than development hypotheses such as a results framework. The combination of visual representation of the anticipated sequence in which change will occur, and visual

representation of all of the factors that need to come together in order for change to occur, all based on a clear and testable set of hypotheses, results in a stronger communication tool.

Slide 8: Because a TOC contains outcomes produced by other actors it is critical to work toward common understanding with other stakeholders on shared values, strategies, and systems. We can use the TOC to gain agreement among stakeholders about what defines success and what it takes to achieve it. A TOC can help to demonstrate that all steps in the pathway are vital and in optimal conditions, we should attempt to address them in a collaborative and unified manner.

Slide 9: Even among the outcomes a project agrees to address, every organization will have gaps or weaknesses in some area. This is okay! One organization does not have to accomplish everything. Identifying gaps and weaknesses helps an organization recognize where it needs support to achieve the long-term goal in the TOC.

To identify potential partners, remember to think "outside the box." While some organizations have a history of working closely with others, this part of the process allows us to expand the pool of potential partners. Project planners should not limit potential partners to people or organizations they have worked with in the past. Of course, the final determination may indeed be a familiar partner organization, but the key is to think about what partner has the best set of abilities, skills, knowledge, and experience to best support the TOC.

Slide 10: The TOC helps identify the most critical and strategic interventions and helps determine the sequence in which they should occur. In poorly-design projects, certain initiatives may be a part of the strategy because an organization has strong capacity in this area, or because there is sectoral competition for and distribution of funds, or because a certain type of intervention is trending. A project design based on a vetted TOC keeps us practical when choosing interventions. If there is not a logical link between an intervention and an outcome in the TOC, it does not belong in the project design.

Having a TOC diagram that shows where an organization's efforts fit within the big picture keeps us realistic when setting performance targets. It allows us to reflect on how much change can we expect to see over the life of the project. The efforts of external actors will influence the extent of change we can expect to achieve.

SLIDES 11-12

Using a Theory of Change to Learn, Reflect, and Adapt in the Implementation Phase

Use the TOC to determine the sequencing of activities. The diagram in **slide 11** provides the logic for starting certain activities first, implementing certain activities consecutively, and others simultaneously.

Slide 12: The TOC should be an integral part of your M&E system. Similar to other logic models, a TOC provides a blueprint for evaluation that identifies measurable indicators of success. In the implementation phase, you need to operationalize the indicators you defined during TOC design. You may need to measure indicators annually or more frequently, depending on the type. Similarly, you will likely need differing data collection systems for the various indicators.

Keep a large copy of the TOC available for staff to provide a visual representation of what is changing and what is not yet changing. This allows a team to see why a project may be having problems achieving higher-level outcomes. The TOC process requires that performance management systems accommodate uncertainty and flexibility. Think of the TOC as your evolving guide for implementation and M&E, rather than an indelible prescription.

***Slide 13*:** You can and should review and revise your TOC periodically.[28] For example, you may need to revise a TOC as a result of annual monitoring and ongoing formative research. During implementation, you will have the opportunity to learn more about the institutional and policy environment, gender dynamics, value chains and markets, or people's strategies for managing shock and stress, among other contextual factors. As you learn more about barriers and enablers to change you may need to modify the causal linkages and pathways in your TOC diagram. In another example, you may need to revise your TOC due to a significant change in contextual conditions such as an Ebola outbreak, an earthquake, the start or demise of government vaccination programs, government input subsidies, etc. When one part of the TOC is affected, you must revisit all pathways, because all factors are interrelated. There are many benefits to revising a TOC during the implementation phase. Projects can adapt based on learning, can become more innovative in response to dynamic contexts, and can promote implementation that supports an emergency – development continuum.

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28 TOPS is in the process of writing guidance for conducting annual TOC reviews. We hope to publish this guidance by the end of 2018. Please reach out to lstarr@savechildren.org for existing resources on this process.

Handout 5.3 demonstrates how TOC annual reviews vary depending on the activity year.

Theory of Change Annual Reviews: How they vary depending on year of activity

Year	What commonly takes place in annual TOC review	What you need to understand/ review (non-exhaustive) during the TOC review	Sample data sources
Year 1	• Review and correct causal logic; • Review output to outcome linkage with a sustainability lens • Conduct context review (e.g. assumptions, external actor, general context, etc.); • Ensure there are sufficient means for annually monitor-ing whether change is occur-ring as you expect it to for all critical outcomes (indicators, qualitative data, secondary sources, etc.)	• Are critical assumptions expected to hold through life of activity? Why/ why not? • How will pathways be influenced if critical as-sumptions do not hold? If high risk, what is your risk mitigation plan? • Any new critical assumptions that are outside the influence of the activity? • Any new external actors whose efforts are criti-cal to the success of your pathways? • Should any external actors be deleted from your TOC pathways? • Any new preconditions you believe to be neces-sary to achieve an outcome? These could be outputs, outcomes, assumptions, or the efforts of external actors. • Other changes to the context? • Any indicators need to be added or deleted? • Do indicator targets need to change based on results of context and logic review	• All: Findings from formative research and other studies, including secondary literature • Assumptions: websites; secondary literature; informal key informant (KI) interviews; • External Actors: shared reports; websites; informal KI interviews; staff observa-tions
Year 2	• Conduct context review (e.g. assumptions, external actor, general context, etc.) • Continue to refine logic causal logic, especially cross-purpose linkages, and sustainability plan • Map output/ outcome achievement to TOC dia-grams. • Analyze expected change • Analyze demonstrated change to extent possible. • Ensure there are sufficient means for annually monitor-ing any new preconditions.	• **Everything listed in Year 1 cell** • The extent to which external actors are producing outputs and achieving their out-comes? If progress is slower than expected, what is potential impact on your TOC pathway achievement? • To the extent possible with available Year 2 data, and in consideration of how long it takes to demonstrate change for various outcomes, discuss: • Which outcomes are expected to demonstrate change within the next year? What systems must be developed to track progress if not already in place? • Which outputs must be prioritized in order to stimulate change (layering, sequencing, integration!)? • Are all outputs still necessary to stimulate change? • How are various participant groups engaged in all activities thought to collectively stimu-late change (layering, integration)? • Are there implications to the budget as a result of new activities thought necessary to stimulate change in the TOC?	• **Everything listed in Year 1 cell** • Staff observations, espe-cially changes that may not be formally monitored • IPTT % of target achieved for outputs and outcomes in lower tiers of TOC • Annual monitoring data sources for tracking not reported in IPTT • DIP output status: in progress, completed, eliminated • Activity progress reports

Year	What commonly takes place in annual TOC review	What you need to understand/ review (non-exhaustive) during the TOC review	Sample data sources
Years 3–4	• Conduct context review (e.g. assumptions, external actor, general context, etc.) • Review MTE recommendations and how they fit into the TOC • Map output/ outcome achievement to TOC diagrams. • Analyze expected change • Analyze demonstrated change. • Ensure there are sufficient means for annually monitoring any new preconditions.	• **Everything listed in Year 1 cell** • The extent to which external actors are producing outputs and achieving their outcomes? If progress is slower than expected, what is potential impact on your TOC pathway achievement? • Which outcomes are expected to demonstrate change within the next year? What systems must be developed to track progress, if not already in place? • Which outputs must be prioritized in order to stimulate change (layering, sequencing, integration!)? • Are all outputs still necessary to stimulate change? • How are various participant groups engaged in all activities thought to collectively stimulate change (layering, integration)? • Are there implications to the budget as a result of new activities thought necessary to stimulate change in the TOC	• **Everything listed in Year 1 and Year 2 cells** • Midterm findings and recommendations • IPTT % of target achieved for outcomes in all tiers of TOC

SLIDE 14

Using a Theory of Change to Learn, Reflect, and Adapt in the Evaluation Phase

The TOC should be the foundation for developing key questions for final evaluations. The diagram will outline key hypotheses and assumptions to explore. If a project experiences success, use the TOC to demonstrate a definitive link between outcomes and interventions. If a project is unsuccessful, use the TOC to help understand whether the theory or implementation was poor. Finally, use the TOC to reflect on how project-inspired change links and contributes to wider contextual change.

SLIDE 15

Discussion

FACILITATOR

Guide a discussion asking participants how they intend to use the TOC process and product in their daily work. Call out the different professional sectors in the workshop (e.g., program development staff; project managers; M&E, knowledge management, and other technical specialists; and business development staff) to share their unique thoughts.

Following this discussion, reconvene the entire group for a wrap-up and final thoughts on the course.

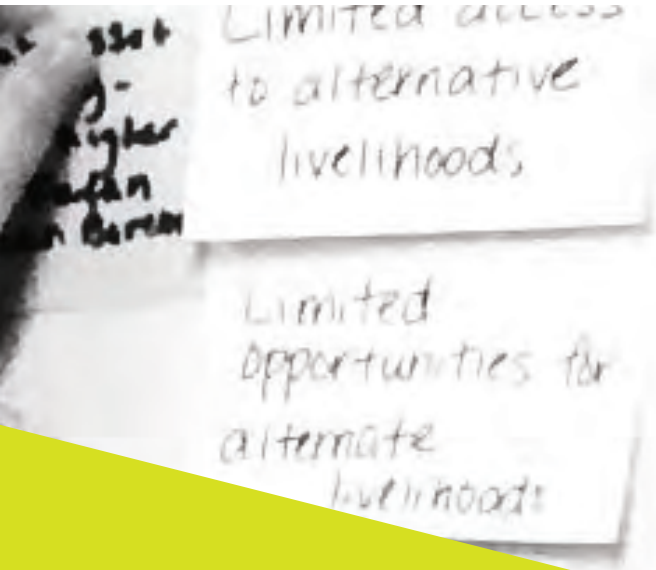
Works Referenced in Module 5

Caldwell, R., and S. Sprechmann. 1997. DM&E Workshop Series: Volume 2: Facilitator's Manual. Geneva, Switzerland: CARE International.

The Food Security and Nutrition Network Monitoring and Evaluation Task Force. 2015. Monitoring and Evaluation Facilitator's Guide. Washington, DC: The TOPS Program.

USAID. 2010. *Theories of change and indicator development in conflict management and mitigation*. Washington, DC: USAID.

USAID Bureau of Democracy, Conflict, and Humanitarian Assistance Office of Food for Peace. 2016. *Technical Reference for FFP Development Food Assistance Projects.* Chapter II Mandatory Program Design Elements, pages 4-17.



The international development community is showing great interest in using a theory of change (TOC) as the development hypothesis for programs and activities. Developing and using a theory of change contributes to a common and evidence-based understanding among all stakeholders around the actions needed to achieve desired changes. This curriculum presents a TOC method that is aligned to the requirements of creating a development hypothesis for Development Food Security Activities (DFSAs), funded by USAID's Office of Food for Peace (FFP). The author's previous experience in program and TOC development, participant feedback from six years of TOPS workshops, and input from the FFP Monitoring and Evaluation team all contributed to this curriculum.

For any questions or comments, please contact Laurie Starr at lstarr@savechildren.org.