Process Quality Check:
THEORY OF CHANGE DEVELOPMENT

Use these guiding process questions to enhance quality and completeness at each step of the Theory of Change (TOC) development. The questions are a complementary resource to IDEAL's *Planning for Theory of Change Development: Roles, Responsibilities, and Timeline* guidebook and corresponding slide decks.

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PROCESS CHECK #1: Data Collection

Does our tool/process for prioritizing what data will be collected:

- Align information needs to FFP's Strategic Results Framework, RFA/CSI priorities, and other relevant frameworks (e.g. resilience)?
    - » Separate the information needs into categories so that key research questions can be developed and prioritized for each category?
- Help us determine what information can be gathered through a desk review and what will require primary research?

Do our primary data collection tools:

- Capture information that will help us analyze the root of problems at various levels (individuals, households, communities, and systems)?
    - » For example, do they document the current capacity of local service providers to provide necessary services?
- Capture initial information about the willingness of existing institutions to assume increasing responsibility for interventions over the life of the activity and be responsive to population needs?
- Capture information that will help us identify the distinct opportunities and challenges for distinct populations?

Are we capturing sufficient information about the existing efforts of external actors to:

- Inform the selection of DFSA outcomes and designate necessary outcomes that will be the responsibility of others?
- Complete required external actor information in the complementary documentation (TOC narrative)?
    - » Scale relative to activity coverage?
    - » Expected level of collaboration with activity?
    - » Timing of when external actor outcomes are expected?
    - » Likelihood that external actors will achieve outcomes?

Have we planned and budgeted for iterative rounds of data collection and organization?

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PROCESS CHECK #2: Data Organization and Pre-analysis

Do our data organization and analysis tools allow us to:

- Organize information in categories that are aligned with FFP's Strategic Results Framework and RFA/CSI priorities?

- Easily identify information gaps?

- Determine when we've reached data saturation?

- Distinguish and prioritize what we need to know from what might be nice to know?

- Disaggregate/identify distinct opportunities and challenges of distinct populations?

- Capture the data source in an organized manner for later use?

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3 PROCESS CHECK #3: Problem Analysis

Have we budgeted sufficient time for thorough, evidence-based problem analysis?

Are we including staff with diverse technical and geographical perspectives in the process?

Are we methodically documenting the evidence for each problem statement in a template that proposal writers can easily reference? This helps ensure that the problem analysis section seamlessly aligns to the proposed TOC.

Have we developed a clear process for vetting the problem tree (or portions of it) with relevant staff who did not participate in the problem tree workshop, including critical stakeholders in the region (e.g., government and private sector)?

PROBLEM TREE LOGIC CHECK

To what extent are all problems in the tree evidence-based?
- If we included any problems for which we do not yet have evidence, did we systematically highlight the gap and develop an action plan to fill this gap?

Does the problem tree include the four main types of challenges:
1. Contextual
2. Systemic weaknesses
3. Knowledge, skills, attitudes, and beliefs
4. Behaviors and practices

- Is the relationship between these distinct problem types logical? For example, knowledge/skill problems typically (when combined with other factors) contribute to problematic individual or household behaviors and practices in the upper tiers or behaviors of system actors (e.g., responsiveness of government to provide XYZ) in lower tiers.

Did we remove all problem statements that are definitional versus causal factors?

Do problem statements clearly identify populations who are disproportionately impacted by various problems?

Did we remove all problem statements that are not considered critical causes of the problem above them?

Are we resisting the urge to flip it before problem logic is solid?

PROBLEM TREE FORMAT

Did we save an electronic version of the problem tree for later reference?

Is each key problem displayed in a separate diagram?

Are linkages between problem tree pages clearly articulated on both pages?

4 PROCESS CHECK #4: Problem Tree Flip

Did we flip it too early?

Are outcomes stated as completed, measurable results rather than processes?

Are groups who are disproportionately affected by the problem clearly identified in the outcome statement?

Did we emphasize gender inclusiveness in outcome statements, even if the corresponding problem did not disproportionately affect one gender or another?

Do key words highlight other themes important to the specific RFA/CSI we are responding to (e.g., environment)?

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5 PROCESS CHECK #5: Theory of Change Pathways

In all cases, is the relation between two levels of outcome causal and not definitional?

Does the TOC include systemic outcomes, outcomes related to improved knowledge, skills, attitudes, beliefs, and outcomes related to new behaviors and practices?

- Is the relationship between these outcome types logical?

Can we make a strong case that every precondition for an outcome is necessary to stimulate change?

Can we make a strong case that, when combined, the group of preconditions for each outcome will be sufficient to stimulate sustainable change?

Are all assumptions added to the diagram external (e.g., whether the condition remains in place is completely outside the control of the DFSA)?

- Are they supported with evidence in the complementary documentation? Did we include risks to pathways if the assumption fails, and contingency plans if risk to pathway failure is high?
- Did we use a unique shape and color to highlight them in the TOC diagram?
- Are they clearly linked to the part of the TOC pathway to which they are critical?
- Even though FFP does not require critical internal implementation assumptions in the TOC, have we noted them for our DFSA's own internal monitoring efforts so they can contribute to adaptive management decisions?

Did we remove all assumptions that cannot be backed up with evidence or for which evidence completely contradicts the assumption?

Did we add a rationale to the TOC diagram for all links between preconditions and outcomes that:

- Are not well established in the development community for our implementation context?
- Are not common knowledge for a wide variety of practitioners (e.g., areas that are common knowledge to only a specific group of sectoral specialists)?

Did we use a new shape to depict the rationales and to support each one with evidence in the complementary documentation?

If we made any corrections to the logic, did we keep the problem tree up-to-date?

Did we prioritize all new information gaps into those we must fill before submitting the proposal and those we plan to fill in the refinement year?

6a

Did a thorough stakeholder mapping exercise inform the selection of external actor outcomes?

- Does every outcome allocated to our DFSA fill a gap (e.g., no one else is sufficiently addressing it)?

Does the pathway logic of DFSA and external actor responsibilities make sense? For example, there are no pathways depicting a DFSA outcome for which external actors produce all necessary preconditions or vice versa.

Are all external actor outcomes in the TOC clearly distinguishable from those our DFSA aims to achieve (e.g., distinct shape and color)?

Did we provide evidence to support all external actor efforts in the complementary documentation?

- Outcome that the external actor will produce?

- Scale relative to activity coverage?

- Expected level of collaboration with activity?

- Timing of when external actor outcomes are expected?

- Likelihood that external actors will achieve outcomes?

- Risk to the activity if the outcome is not realized in time?

- Monitoring plan?

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6b

PROCESS CHECK #6b: DFSA Interventions/Sustainability

LOGIC AND EVIDENCE

Do all proposed interventions have a logical link to at least one TOC outcome?

Does every causal pathway start from either an intervention output or an external actor effort?

Are all intervention outputs considered necessary preconditions to the outcome they link to? The outcome cannot be achieved without this intervention.

Does evidence suggest that the combined set of proposed interventions are sufficient to stimulate outcome achievement?

- Is evidence supporting the causal linkages valid for the specific operating context? Will formative research be necessary in the refinement year to contextualize the evidence? If so, how have we documented that for FFP and for our future implementation team?

- Are income-related interventions based on an economic analysis that identifies the most economically viable pathways identified for specific target groups?

When necessary, have we used rationales to demonstrate evidence that a proposed intervention should produce the anticipated result? Are they supported in the complementary documentation?

Did new assumptions surface relative to the output-to-outcome link? Are they supported in the complementary documentation?

STRATEGY

Do proposed interventions reflect what is most critical for target participants (i.e., evidence-based need versus a favored technical approach of staff)?

Do proposed interventions take into account differing needs and opportunities based on age, sex, ethnicity, livelihoods, exposure to shocks, and available assets?

Do proposed interventions include those that will promote population-based change, such as:

- Those that will self-replicate?
- Broadcasting knowledge across the whole population?
- Using participants as agents of change?

Have we documented how population-based change will occur in the complementary documentation?

Have we demonstrated effective layering (i.e., fewer technical focus silos) in the way we present the intervention outputs?

SUSTAINABILITY

Have we conducted a thorough sustainability review and asked questions related to services and input providers, such as:

- To sustain each of the key outcomes, which services and input provisioning must continue beyond the life of the activity?

- How will these crucial services and inputs be provided for after the end of the activity?

- What will motivate service and input providers to continue to provide services after the end of the award?

- How will motivation of the service providers be enhanced and improved?

- How will we help the potential service and input providers so that they can access resources to continue providing services and inputs?

- How will we help the potential service and input providers so that they can access capacity-strengthening support after the end of activity?

In the sustainability review, did we ask questions related to participants, such as:

- What will motivate participants to pay for services (if pay-for-services is one of the approaches)?

- Do listed outputs demonstrate how the activity strengthens the capacity of individual beneficiaries to implement recommended practices or manage their resources?

- Does the sequencing of outputs or the pathways demonstrate how individual beneficiaries will continue to have resources necessary to adopt and apply new practices after the end of the activity?

- What will motivate participants to continue applying newly adopted practices after the end of the activity?

PHRASING AND FORMATTING

Are all intervention outputs phrased as measurable results?

Are target groups specified in intervention outputs?

Are all intervention outputs in the TOC clearly distinguishable from outcomes (e.g., distinct shape and color)?

Did we limit the intervention outputs depicted in the TOC to those that are key to catalyzing change (e.g., no administrative outputs)?

Did we remove all boxes that reflect sequential implementation versus causal logic (e.g. a separate box depicting village savings groups formed with an arrow leading to VSLA groups trained)?

7

PROCESS CHECK #7: Theory of Change Graphics

Does our TOC include a single-page summary diagram and a separate diagram for each purpose?

Have we consistently used different shapes, colors, shading, borders, icons, numbers, or font size to distinguish the different elements of the TOC?

- Does every page of the TOC diagram include a key that explains the significance of different shapes, colors, borders, icons, shading, or font sizes?

Does every page of the TOC diagram include acronyms that may be unfamiliar to all readers?

Is the direction of arrows clear and are pathways easy to follow?

Are causal pathways that flow between TOC purpose diagrams easy to follow and understand?

- Are all cross-purpose linkages included on both pages that they relate to? Are cross-purpose linkages numbered at the outcome level (versus purpose level) for easy reference?

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PROCESS CHECK #8: Logframe and Indicators

LOGFRAME

Did we number all outcomes the DFSA will produce and not number outcomes produced by other actors?

Did we assign only one number to outcomes that are preconditions for more than one outcome above?

Did we methodically go through and re-number all the cross-purpose linkages so that they are easy to locate on the corresponding page?

- Are they numbered at the outcome level (versus Purpose level) for easy reference?
- Are all external assumptions entered in the logframe?
- Are they entered on the same logframe row as the outcome for which they are a precondition?

For every external actor outcome, have we entered in the logframe the assumption that the actor will be successful in achieving their efforts?

- Are these assumptions entered on the same logframe row as the outcome for which they are a precondition?

INDICATORS

Did we first map all the required FFP indicators to our TOC and then begin to identify gaps?

Did we identify at least one indicator for every output that transfers to the logframe?

Did we identify at least one outcome indicator or other measure for:

- Outcomes that do not have any FFP outcome indicator?
- Outcomes for which change is only captured by baseline & endline surveys?
- Outcomes that do not have sufficient FFP indicators to measure change?

This guide is an add-on to the Theory of Change (TOC) curriculum developed by The Technical and Operational Performance Support (TOPS) Program.

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