Practical Approaches to Theories of Change in Conflict, Security, and Justice Programmes

Part II: Using Theories of Change in Monitoring and Evaluation

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Practice Products for the CCVRI

Improving Measurement in DFID Crime, Conflict & Violence Programming

This document is one of a series of Practice Products developed under the *Results Initiative in Conflict, Crime, and Violence Programming* within DFID. The full set of products is intended to support DFID country offices and their partners to develop better measures of programme results in difficult conflict and fragile environments.

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Document Summary

Title:

Practical Approaches to Theories of Change in Conflict, Security and Justice Programmes:
Part II: Using Theories of Change in Monitoring and Evaluation

Purpose and intended use of this document:

The goal of this document is to improve the effectiveness of DFID programmes and the measurement of their impacts by providing DFID Advisers with the practical skills to develop high quality theories of change, to understand the role they play in programme design and assessment. It is intended for DFID advisors to more clearly and explicitly articulate their theories of change as a means of improving the effectiveness of interventions.

Part I first explores the fundamentals of theories of change: what they are, why they are important, and how to create a theory of change. It explores theories of change at different levels, and concludes with advice on how theories of change can enhance the effectiveness and relevance of programming.

Part II continues to build upon Part I by focusing on how theories of change can be used in the monitoring and evaluation stages of the project cycle. It provides practical guidance on how and why to use theories of change-focused monitoring and evaluation strategies, particularly exploring the ways in which theories of change can be included in any evaluation approach.

Key questions this document addresses:

- Why are Theories of Change important in evaluating programmes and projects?
- How can Theories of Change be used in Monitoring and Evaluation?
- How can Theories of Change be used to generate programme and project indicators?
- What are the limitations of Theories of Change and how can they be overcome?

Key messages/essential "take aways":

- Using theories of change during the monitoring stage of project implementation provides feedback on whether a project, programme or strategy is 'on track' to accomplish the desired change and if the environment is evolving as anticipated in the project or programme design.
- The power of using theories of change is not only important in monitoring but also in evaluation. Using theories of change during the evaluation enables evaluators to ask hard questions about why certain changes are expected, the assumptions of how the change process unfolds, and which outcomes are being selected to focus on and why.
- Developing and explicitly articulating multiple levels of theories of change allows for a greater efficiency in evaluation and identifying problems and successes.
- The process of monitoring our assumptions and theories of change is the same as traditional monitoring of output and performance indicators: it involves an iterative cycle of regular data collection, analysis, reflection, feedback and action. The only thing that changes is *what* you are monitoring.
- Theory-based Evaluation helps assess whether underlying theories of change or assumptions of a programme are correct by identifying the causal linkages between different variables: from inputs to expected results. In a broad definition, any evaluation uncovering implicit or explicit assumptions, hypotheses or theories can be categorized as theory-based evaluation. This approach is particularly useful for learning and accountability as it allows for identifying whether

the success, failure or mixed results of the intervention was due to programme theories and assumptions, or implementation.

- Theories of change are not a solve-all panacea for challenges in design, monitoring and evaluation for conflict, crime and violence initiatives: they must be used in conjunction with other tools and concepts.
- Theories of change are more than simple 'if-then' statements. As testable hypotheses, we need theories of change to be as reflective of the actual environment as possible without overly complicating the situation. Clearly defining the boundaries of the theory and its assumptions is critical.

Intended audience of this document (including assumed skill level):
The intended audience of this series of documents are DFID advisors for conflict, crime and violence programming. The secondary audiences are staffs working in or on issues relating to conflict, crime and violence programming including program designers, managers, M&E specialists and evaluators.

Part I assumes little to no knowledge of theories of change, and therefore is the introductory piece to this guidance series. It clearly articulates what theories of change are, why they matter, and how they can be used for more effective programming.

Part II, as the secondary piece in this series, assumes an introductory knowledge of theories of change, as well as of monitoring and evaluation approaches, tools and processes.

Key topics/tags:

Theories of Change
Monitoring
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Assumptions
Theory-based Evaluation

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Cross-references to other documents in the series:

Bayne, Sarah. *M&E of Integrated Peacebuilding and Development*. DFID: Department for International Development, 2013.
Corlazzoli, Vanessa, and Jonathon White. *Back to Basics: A Compilation of Best Practices in Design, Monitoring & Evaluation in Fragile and Conflict-affected Environments*. DFID: Department for International Development, 2013.
Corlazzoli, Vanessa, and Jonathon White*. Practical Approaches to Theories of Change in Conflict, Security & Justice Programmes Part II: Using Theories of Change in Monitoring and Evaluation*. 2012.
Goldwyn, Rachel. *Making the Case for Conflict Sensitivity in Security and Justice Sector Reform Programming*. DFID: Department for International Development, 2013.
Goldwyn, Rachel and Diana Chigas, *Monitoring and Evaluating Conflict Sensitivity: Methodological Challenges and Practical Solutions*. DFID: Department for International Development, 2013.
Woodrow, Peter. *Practical Approaches to Theories of Change in Conflict, Security & Justice Programmes Part I*. 2012.

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Part II: Using Theories of Change in Monitoring and Evaluation

This is Part II in the guidance series on Practical Approaches to Theories of Change in Conflict, Security & Justice Programmes*. Part I examined how theories of change are used in the design phase. Part II will now examine their use in monitoring and evaluation.*

I   WHY ARE THEORIES OF CHANGE IMPORTANT IN MONITORING AND EVALUATING PROGRAMMES AND PROJECTS?

In Kosovo, the international community operated for several years under the assumption (or theory of change) that peace could be achieved by improving relations between the two main conflicting parties by bridging relations between ethnicities in multi-ethnic areas. Projects therefore focused on the return of refugees and internally displaced people (initially Kosovo Albanians forced out before the NATO bombings and later Kosovo Serbs who were forced out during the violence after 1999). Based on this theory, the international community funded many programmes promoting dialogue, exchanges, youth interactions, women's groups, and so forth – all aimed at cross-communal relationship building. *Later evaluations and research, however, revealed that these actions did not address the key dynamics and drivers of conflict and violence*: returnees were not central actors with respect to violence, although they were important victims of the conflict. A later study of multiple agency efforts, "Has Peacebuilding Made a Difference in Kosovo?", found that work within each separate community to create more responsible leadership had a much greater effect on peace than the bi-communal work[1].

This real-life example demonstrates the importance of not only making our theories of change and underlying assumptions explicit, but also the utility of critically scrutinizing them. Such scrutiny, through monitoring and evaluation, is the focus of this paper.

1.1   Why are Theories of Change Important in Monitoring and Evaluating Programmes and Projects?

A theory of change that adequately describes the actions, the desired change, and the underlying assumptions or strategy is essential for monitoring and evaluating programmes and projects. The theory of change will help programme staff and evaluators understand what the project is trying to achieve, how, and why. Knowing this critical information will enable staff and evaluators to monitor and measure the desired results and compare them against the original theory of change.

> "Monitoring is an on-going process that generates information, generally on pre-selected indicators, to inform decisions about the intervention while it is being implemented."
>
> *From Cheyanne Church and Mark Rogers,* Designing for Results: Integrating Monitoring & Evaluation in Peacebuilding Activities*, Chapter 6, p. 82.*

Theories of change statements are highly contingent on a range of factors being in place for a change to happen. Social change is complex and unpredictable and, some would argue, often cannot be reduced

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[1] Diana Chigas et al "Has Peacebuilding Made a Difference in Kosovo?"? *CDA Collaborative Learning Projects* 2007, in co-operation with CARE International, accessed 9 July 9, 2010, http://www.cdainc.com/cdawww/pdf/book/cdapeacebuildingreportkosovo_Pdf4.pdf.

to simple linear 'If ...., then' statements.[2] Very often the effectiveness of a particular intervention and the validity of a theory of change rest on issues that are far removed from a project's scope and influence—these are, after all, complex environments.

Using theories of change during the monitoring stage of project implementation provides feedback on whether a project, programme or strategy is 'on track' to accomplish the desired change and if the environment is evolving as anticipated in the project or programme design.

While monitoring our assumptions is not widely practised, it is nevertheless quite useful. As our assumptions are monitored, data, combined with informed, evidence-based perspective, can illuminate whether all the design components were adequately taken into account at the design stage.   For instance, staff can ask themselves did we consider the right factors and dynamics in the initial design or conflict assessment. Has anything unexpected occurred in the environment that was not foreseen, and why wasn't it foreseen? Are there gaps in our strategy to bring about change?

Example 1: Multi-Donor Engagement in Southern Sudan

For several years, the international community engaged the conflict in Southern Sudan through the peace dividend theory: that all development contributes to conflict prevention and peacebuilding. The theory has proven valid in other contexts, and it was therefore assumed that development would indeed contribute to conflict prevention and peacebuilding in Southern Sudan. In a later evaluation, however, the link between delivering services and abating violence in Southern Sudan was not found. "The reasons for violent conflict are more often found in ethnic divisions, land and cattle disputes, and disaffected youth—variables that are in many cases outside the influence of socioeconomic forms of assistance" (which was one of the four thematic focuses of assistance).[3] A concerted monitoring strategy that examined whether the peace dividend theory was indeed valid in the context of Southern Sudan combined with on-going monitoring and updating of the conflict analysis, could have improved the relevance of assistance and created greater positive impact on both the conflict dynamics and the development of the region.

The power of using theories of change is not only important in monitoring but also in evaluation. Using theories of change during the evaluation enables evaluators to ask hard questions about why certain changes are expected, the assumptions of how the change process unfolds, and which outcomes are being selected to focus on and why.

When an evaluation incorporates a theory of change review, the pertinent theories of change should be critically reviewed for its relevance, efficacy and effectiveness as part of the evaluation and covered in the evaluation's findings, conclusions and lessons learned.

There are often multiple theories of change in large-scale strategies or programmes, making it infeasible to review each and every theory. The key or pertinent theories should therefore be selected for monitoring, evaluation and/or assessment. Such analysis will help contribute to an understanding of approaches that work in addressing conflict, crime and violence. The purpose and level of the assessment should guide which theory or theories you chose. For example, an evaluation of a single donor agency's engagement in a particular sector in a single country might focus on the overarching theory of change for that particular sector.

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[2] Reina Neufeldt, "'Frameworkers' and 'Circlers' – Exploring Assumptions in Impact Assessment," *Berghof Handbook for Conflict Transformation I and II*, 2007 and 2011, accessed 25 September 2012, http://dmeforpeace.org/learn/frameworkers-and-circlers-exploring-assumptions-impact-assessment.

[3] Jon Bennett et al, Aiding the Peace: A Multi-donor Evaluation of Support to Conflict Prevention and Peacebuilding Activities in Southern Sudan 2005-2010, ITAD Ltd., United Kingdom, 2010, p. xvii.

Theories of change can be an essential part of contributing to our understanding of successful interventions seeking to address conflict, crime and violence. Through an analysis of the accuracy of its underlying theory or theories of change, a programme or project can identify whether the chosen theory was validated—in other words, whether it guided effective and predictive actions. Knowing whether a false or incomplete theory may be a key explanatory factor for a programme, project or policy's failure—and why that theory was false or incomplete—also contributes to a better understanding of what it means to be effective in this area.

To summarise, knowing what the theories of change are in projects and programmes can help monitor assumptions about how change is produce and guide evaluations to identifying to what extent the degree of success of failure is due to the programme design and programme theory and assumptions, or to programme implementation.

2   USING THEORIES OF CHANGE IN MONITORING AND EVALUATION

2.1   Making Theories of Change Explicit for Monitoring and Evaluation

As part of the design and planning phase, some projects and programmes will already have a vision of what they hope to achieve and how that change can happen in the context; others will be less explicit or even absent. While it is possible to articulate theories at any stage in the project cycle, it is best practice to do so in the design phase.

It can be useful, even when theories are made explicit in the design phase, to review the primary theories at an early stage in strategy, programme or project implementation. For instance, donors may ask grantees to make their theories of change more explicit in project design narratives during the call to proposal or after they have been reviewed and granted conditional funding. Implementing staff may also review the theories of change during kick-off meetings with key stakeholders: are the assumptions still valid? Have there been any major changes to the conflict or context? It also provides an opportunity to ensure that project staff, partners and other key stakeholders all share a common understanding of how change is expected to occur, and their role in that change. Implementing project staff can also review the project theories of change when creating work-plans and reviewing baselines results.

When a theory of change is not clearly stated, even at the end of the project, the evaluator should try to elicit or discern the logic behind the activity as part of the evaluation process.[4] This can be done through desk review coupled with key informant interviews and focus groups with relevant design and implementing project staff.

Box 1: Three Strategies for Determining the Theory of Change in Evaluation

In complex environments, even when a project has an explicitly stated theory of change, evaluators should review the theory of change with the implementing staff as the theories may have changed throughout the life of the project without being explicitly being written down. The evaluator should:

1. Discuss with project implementers and key stakeholders whether or not the theory was followed during implementation; and,

[4] Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, *Guidance on Evaluating Conflict Prevention and Peacebuilding Activities: Working draft for application period*, DAC Network on Conflict, Peace and Development Co-operation and the DAC Network on Development Evaluation, 2008, accessed 25 September 2012, http://www.oecd.org/development/evaluationofdevelopmentprogrammes/dcdndep/39774573.pdf.

> 2. Note how it might have changed over time and why.

> If the theory has been generally followed, the evaluator's task should be to determine if the theory proved valid and the changes were achieved.
>
> If the theory was not followed, the evaluator's task is three-fold: 1) to determine why the theory was not followed; 2) reconstruct the theory of change the project was implemented upon; and, 3) determine the accuracy and relevance of the identified theory.
>
> If the theory was changed, the evaluator should seek to find out if the evolution of the theory of change was documented by the staff and why it evolved. If the evaluator finds no formal written documentation of the evolving theory of change, then the evaluator will have to work with the staff to reconstruct key decision-points.

It can be useful, either when constructing or re-constructing a theory(ies) of change, to recognize what is simple, complicated, and complex in the theory(ies). Simple elements of programme theory are those "where the destination is known, the path to reach it is known, and it is simple to follow the plan."[5] This might be an output, the delivery of training for example. Such simple elements do not require a huge effort in monitoring: they are simple, and it is easy to understand whether or not it served its purpose in the design hierarchy.

Complicated elements, where there are multiple components that are needed to produce the intended results, may require additional monitoring and evaluation efforts.[6] This might be, for example, when there is a longer results chain. Take for instance a campaign to create favourable public opinion on an anti-discrimination law. The campaign might involve various elements of public education (such as a combination of public service announcements, radio talk shows, fliers, and town-hall meetings), as well as capacity development and mobilisation for public nonviolent demonstrations, and promoting citizen-engagement with their local and national representatives in government. All these elements need to mesh together in just the right way (though there may be more than one way) to arrive at favourable public opinion on the law, and therefore additional monitoring and evaluation efforts are required to ensure the project is indeed 'on track' to achieve the result.

Finally, complex elements are those which are emergent and adaptive: they cannot be easily planned for due to the ever changing ebbs and flows of various factors.[7] It is these elements which require an advanced and concerted research, monitoring and evaluation strategy. Take for example the previously cited multi-donor engagement in Southern Sudan. International strategy was largely based off the 'peace dividends' theory of change, and while the assumption that this theory was applicable in Southern Sudan was proven invalid, the assistance mechanisms were quite complex. Assistance from some 14 donors was structured around four thematic areas: socioeconomic development, good governance, reform of justice and security institutions, and, culture of justice, truth and reconciliation. The combined interactions between and resulting outcomes of these thematic areas would, it was believed, result in a mutually-reinforcing cycle of development leading to peace, and peace in turn leading to further development. This multi-donor strategy for assistance was complex, indeed.

Example 2: Vague Theories and Unstated Assumptions in aid to the Palestinian Territories

> An evaluation should explicitly state the underlying assumptions or theory of change of the target policy or programme, as in the following excerpt from a report on Netherlands

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[5] Patricia Rogers and Richard Hummelbrunner, *Equity-Focused Evaluations: On-line e-Learning programme*, Module 1: Evaluation and Equity, p. 124.
[6] Rogers and Hummelbrunner, Module 1, p. 124.
[7] Ibid.

assistance for the Palestinian Territories:

"The evaluation *takes as a premise* that balanced socio-economic development and a functioning civil society in the Palestinian territories is favourable to the peace process."[8]

However, clearly stating the expected link between programme actions/strategies and peace outcomes is only a first step. The *causal* relationships and assumptions underlying the theory of change should also be examined. For instance, in this example, evaluators would want to verify whether or not and how balanced socioeconomic development and civil society contributed to the peace process as assumed and as suggested by the activities of the program. Doing so may reveal dramatically different results that would shed new light both on the project and its underlying theories and assumptions.

Do balanced socio-economic development and a stronger civil society really 'add up' to favourable effects on the peace process? A lesson from Kosovo is perhaps such automatic transfers should not be assumed. By taking this premise the evaluation was unable to determine whether or not the aid programme positively influenced the peace process.

The example below from a project in Liberia provides further proof of the utility and importance of evaluating theories of change to help ascertain whether the assumptions that informed the project or programme were correct.

Example 3: Evaluating grassroots conflict prevention in Liberia

In the wake of the 14-year civil war in Liberia, a large international NGO received donor funding to develop Community Peace Councils (CPCs), a community-based mechanism for resolving a range of disputes, with an explicitly inter-ethnic approach. The CPCs were designed to promote greater democratic participation through leadership development. The evaluation team first identified underlying theories of change and programme assumptions (derived mainly from discussions with local and international staff members):

Theory #1: If a new community-level mechanism for handling a range of dispute types is established, then it will contribute to keeping the peace and avoiding incidents that have the potential for escalating into serious violence.

Theory #2: If inclusive structures for community problem solving are created, then communication, respect, and productive interactions among subgroups in the community will improve, as will the access of disenfranchised groups to decision making.

Theory #3: If a new leadership group infused with democratic concepts is created and provided with critical skills, then it will foster more effective and responsive leadership.
The evaluation team used these theories of change to assess how appropriate they were for the situation in Liberia and how they were working out in practice. For example, the team examined what kinds of conflicts the CPCs handled, and whether those conflicts had the potential for escalating and inciting widespread violence. What the evaluation team found was that the CPCs were, for the most part, **not** handling the most serious and volatile disputes, which concerned land issues. The main conclusion was that, while the CPCs were set up and trained well, they were mostly excluded from handling land issues due to lack of official authority. As communities were repopulated, traditional leaders re-established their power and

[8] Frans Makken and Paul Wijmenga, *Palestinian Territories: Review of the Netherlands development programme for the Palestinian territories, 1994-1999*, Policy and Operations Evaluation Department, 1999, quoted in Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, "Guidance on Evaluating Conflict Prevention and Peacebuilding," p. 37.

refused to submit to the CPC's, instead using them to address issues that they preferred someone else deal with, such as interpersonal disputes. The theory regarding alternative leadership models proved unfounded, as traditional leaders gained control over the CPCs.

Several links crucial to the success of the project were missing. The evaluation recommended that the agency work to expand the mandate and capability of the CPCs for handling land disputes by connecting them to land commissions and other emerging government structures. It should also be said that the CPCs did represent a useful developmental advance, even if they were unable to provide, in their original structure, a major contribution to Peace Writ Large.[9]

Multiple Levels of Theories should be Explicit
Developing and explicitly articulating multiple levels of theories of change allows for a greater efficiency in evaluation and identifying problems and successes. For instance, the overall theory of change for the sector/portfolio may be perceived to be sound, but the theories of change for the project could have issues. Thus, an evaluation will determine that instead of faulting the overall theory of change at the sector/portfolio level, corrections can be made at the project level theory of change. Correspondingly, a successful project level theory of change can be pointed out and evaluated for positive lessons learned, even if the overall theory of change failed to accomplish its goal. All of which will strengthen the impact of a project and its activities.

2.2   Using Theories of Change in Monitoring and Evaluation

Monitoring and evaluation in social change programming requires knowing what changes and assumptions one expects to monitor, and how these changes are expected to develop over the course of implementation. The theory of change guides monitoring and evaluation efforts to focus on the particular assumptions, outputs, outcomes, impacts, and even sustainability of a programme.

The next section of this paper outlines practical steps on how theories of change can be used in monitoring and evaluation and during the different stages of program implementation. For the purpose of this paper, we will be focusing on the following five stages: 1) developing indicators, 2) baselines, 3) mid-term evaluation, 4) evaluation, and 5) scale-up decisions.

Indicators

As outlined in Part I, indicators signal whether particular changes have or have not occurred. Indicators **do not** tell us how or why a change occurs—how we interpret changes in the data collected on indicators does.[10]

While theories of change seek to explain how or why changes are expected to occur (in *theory*), indicators show the extent to which those changes have actually occurred. In the context of theories of change, indicators can provide ways to assess the assumptions, outputs, outcomes, and sustainability in comparison with expectations informed by the design of the programme. (See Grid for Research and Research Design for examples on indicators.)

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[9] Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, *Guidance on Evaluating Conflict Prevention and Peacebuilding Activities: Working draft for application period*, DAC Network on Conflict, Peace and Development Co-operation and the DAC Network on Development Evaluation, 2008, accessed 25 September 2012, http://www.oecd.org/development/evaluationofdevelopmentprogrammes/dcdndep/39774573.pdf.

[10] Cheyanne Church and Mark M. Rogers, *Designing for Results: Integrating Monitoring and Evaluation in Conflict Transformation Programs*, (Washington, DC: Search for Common Ground, 2006).

Most indicators need to contain the following basic information in order for the indicator to be useful.

1. What is to be measured, i.e., what is going to change?
2. Unit of measurement to describe the change
3. Baseline measurement of the indicator
4. Size, magnitude, or dimension of the intended change
5. Quality or standard of the change to be achieved, i.e., the desired result or target
6. Target population(s)
7. Timeframe

Keep in mind also that indicators need to achieve reliability, feasibility and utility standards for effective decision making.[11] As much as possible, it is desirable to create culturally-sensitive and locally relevant indicators.

Grid for Research Design and Data Collection[12]			
Theory of Change	Lines of inquiry—research question(s)/Indicators	What is your evidence of the result being achieved?	Did the activities and lower-level results indeed lead to the anticipated higher-level results?
If youth (project youth and non-project youth), in region X accept and use alternative dispute resolution processes, **then** there will be a reduction in violence in region X.	15% youth in region X have used the alternative dispute resolution processes	100 youth attended trainings	It was recognised that there was a missing activity – the success stories of non-violent dispute resolution processes were not communicated to non-project youth in X region using appropriate media. Thus there was not wide awareness of the alternative dispute resolution process
	20% reduction in incidence of violence compared against original figures	356 youth cited accessing alternative dispute resolution mechanisms	Those accessing the alternative dispute resolution process were pre-disposed to non-violence: only 10% of those using the processes had previously resolved conflicts violently.
	60% of youth accessing alternative dispute resolution	326 youth said they would not use violence as a result	
	8% of youth that accessed alternative dispute resolution processes still continued to use	20% decrease in incidence of violence	

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[11] Church and Rogers, "Designing for Results," Chapter 4, p. 45.

[12] Adapted from CARE International UK, *Guidance for Designing, Monitoring and Evaluating Peacebuilding Projects: Using Theories of Change*, 2012, p. 15.

	violence as a method of conflict resolution
	10% of youth using alternative dispute resolution processes previously resolved conflict violently

Indicators can also be created to signal change in your assumptions. These assumption indicators are measurements or approximations of whether or not a particular assumption or set of assumptions underpinning your theory of change is taking place and/or 'going according to plan'. Assumption indicators therefore provide feedback on whether your theory of change is correct and if the environment is evolving as anticipated in the intervention design.

Example 4: Creating Assumption-level Indicators

Let us suppose that an analysis of a recent spate of violence in region X suggests that youth are key players in the violence and therefore should be the primary target for the intervention. In order to reduce crime and violence between various groups of youth, we decide to strategically train youth in conflict resolution, mediation and dialogue skills. Our theory of change might be, *if* youth in region X accept and use alternative dispute resolution skills and processes, *then* there will be a reduction in crime and violence in region X. Underpinning this theory are several assumptions relating to the abilities and capabilities of youth, but more crucially on the selection of training as the activity: 1) that training is relevant and effective mechanism for knowledge and skill transfer; 2) that information is understood and accepted as an alternative to violence;[13] 3) that youth have a desire to reduce and/or end the violence; 4) that youth will be able to resist the key driving factors which motivated them to violence. The first two assumptions would be the most critical in assuring the desired result, so an indicator for these assumptions might be:

1) *% of participating youth who demonstrate knowledge and skill acquisition and comprehension in pre/post-test;*

2) *% of surveyed youth who state they are confident in their ability to employ nonviolent conflict resolution techniques.*

As you can see from the above example, there are often multiple assumptions underpinning any one theory of change, and any intervention will almost surely have more than one theory of change! Clearly, we cannot collect data on all the assumptions: it would be a massive undertaking and would likely result in data-overload. *It is therefore essential to identify the most critical assumptions that will lead to the desired change*. In the above example, the first identified assumption is most critical because without its success, the intervention is unlikely to achieve the desired outcomes and impacts.

It is critical to begin testing your theory of change early in the project cycle, including and during the early implementation activities and baseline study. In the next section we examine the various ways in which this might be done.

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[13] Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, *Evaluating Peacebuilding Activities in Settings of Conflict and Fragility: Improving Learning for Results*, DAC Guidelines and Reference Series, 2012, p. 60; see also, OECD, *Quality Standards for Development Evaluation*, DAC Quality Reference Series, 2010.

Kick-Off Meetings

Project kick-off meetings, also referred to as inception reviews or meetings, provide one of the first opportunities in project implementation for critical reflection and review of the chosen theory(ies) of change. In all likelihood, the intervention (be it a strategy, priority area, programme or project) was designed several months ago. Kick-off meetings usually occur after funding and local partners have been secured, as it may be useful to have either or both of these stakeholders present.

Kick-off meetings provide opportunity to reflect on whether the chosen theory(ies) and their assumptions are still relevant: has there been a major change in the environment that might necessitate a more nuanced approach, or a different approach entirely? It also provides an opportunity to ensure that all key implementation stakeholders, such as partners and donors or implementing agencies, agree on the chosen theory of change and how the desired results will be achieved.

Baseline

Baselines are critical for monitoring and evaluation to know where one begins and, therefore, for verifying your theories of change. It provides an opportunity to test, reflect upon and, if necessary, adjust the theory of change based on changing conflict or context dynamics *prior to project implementation*. Ideally, the baseline will be conducted with an external or in-house evaluator who can also facilitate testing and refinement of the theory of change based on the data gathered during the study.

The Case of the Missing Data
When baseline data is absent or not necessary, the implementing and project team should also come together when creating or reviewing the work plan. At this time the staff can review or make theories of change explicit. Project staff should also be able to identify critical or turning points in the project when they believe that the theory of change should be reviewed. If the project is complex or being implemented in a conflict zone, there may be critical points in the project where one objective and/or theory has to be achieved, before the project moves on to tackle other types of changes (i.e., A + B = C. C + D = final result). It is at these critical junctions that reflection meetings can be set up to review data or perceptions on program implementation and theories of change, and take corrective action if necessary.

The Role of On-going Monitoring

Monitoring of progress, and therefore of indicators, theories and assumptions, is crucial if the desired changes are to be realized—how else would we know if everything is 'going according to plan'? The process of monitoring our assumptions and theories of change is the same as traditional monitoring of output and performance indicators: it involves an iterative cycle of regular data collection, analysis, reflection, feedback and action. The only thing that changes is *what* you are monitoring.

First, you will need to identify, if you haven't already, the assumptions and their indicators that you need to monitor throughout the project lifecycle.

The next step, then, is to create a regular schedule for data collection, spaced at equal intervals that are appropriate for key decision making events and/or time periods. For example, you will want to have completed the aforementioned cycle prior to submitting a report on the status and progress of the project or programme. You should give yourself enough time to conduct a thorough analysis of the

data, and if possible, share those findings and conclusions with the project beneficiaries and stakeholders for their feedback and input.

Program, implementing staff and partners can come together and ask the following questions:
- Does the evidence reflect what we anticipated in the theory of change, its assumptions and our expectations of change? Why or why not?
- Are there other plausible, evidence-based explanations for the observed results? Why or why not?

The involvement of other key stakeholders, such as key beneficiaries, implementing and local organizations, key officials, etc., can be particularly illuminating, as it provides alternative perspectives that may shed important light on hitherto overlooked and/or underemphasized evidence.

Data collected during the course of a project should be used to reflect on the appropriateness of a theory of change and remedial action taken if it appears that the desired change is not being achieved by the intervention as a result of a false, incomplete or otherwise set of assumptions. Data gathered in this way should be used as a management tool to determine if events are unfolding as expected and, if not, to provide evidence to revise the strategy or programme design. It is therefore essential to have a clear, well-thought out data collection strategy and to utilize the information to make evidence-based decisions throughout the project cycle.

Formative Evaluations (Mid-term Evaluations)

Theories of change can also be assessed at the formative evaluation stage (also commonly known as mid-term evaluations). Formative evaluations or assessments are frequently used to assess the extent to which the project or programme is 'on track' to achieve its goals and objectives. Assessing theories of change and assumptions as part of the formative evaluation helps to identify to what extent success or failure to date is due to programme design and theory, or to programme implementation. It therefore provides an excellent learning opportunity to adjust course if needed, either at the conceptual or implementation levels.

The example below from a large international NGO highlights the utility of including an assessment of theories of change and assumptions in the mid-term evaluation.

Example 5: Formative Evaluation in Indonesia

A project by a large INGO in Indonesia sought to strengthen the rights and roles of Indonesian women at various levels of society by 1) strengthening the capacity of women's organizations to provide on-going leadership development for community and political leaders through a multi-layered, transformational leadership development programme; and, 2) utilizing the media (radio) to empower women around issues of participation, rights, and justice.

The project was designed based on two theories of change: 1) if women legislators and trainers/facilitators are provided with the skills to be more effective, gender sensitive leaders/facilitators, then this will improve their standing in Parliament and enable them to be agents of change to achieve greater equality for women in Indonesian society; 2) if radio programmes are aired with positive messages about women, then views of people in Indonesian society will change.

An internal midterm review by an in-house evaluator, however, found that both theories and their underlying assumptions were incomplete.

The first theory, aside from being only partially complete, did not take into consideration the full extent of the sources and drivers of women's disempowerment in Indonesia: women experience institutionalized discrimination and deep culturally engrained power dynamics. While improving the skills of women legislators would contribute to the achievement of the desired outcomes, such changes are likely to be modest at best even in conjunction with radio programming.

The second theory and its assumptions were also found to be flawed on two levels: first, behaviour change communication literature demonstrates that radio work alone, without concerted efforts at the community and institutional levels, will not bring about the desired changes; second, radio had largely been overtaken in popularity by television, and therefore was not the most appropriate mass communication mechanism.

The midterm review facilitator used a participatory methodology to redesign the theories of change so that they take into consideration the full extent and depth of the disempowerment of women. The process included a document review, interviews with SFCG programme staff in Indonesia and headquarters, as well as staff from partner organisations, women Parliamentarian trainees, and the trainer for the women Parliamentarians. The process culminated with a day-long review meeting with various partners, stakeholders and beneficiaries. Four theories were identified:

1) **If** media is used to break down negative stereotypes, present more positive images of women, and empower women around issues of participation, rights and justice, **then** this will create more positive attitudes towards women as leaders and decision-makers and encourage greater participation by women in the political process.
2) **If** women leaders from across the political divide are engaged in activities that increase social cohesion and encourage collaboration, **then** healthier relationships and shared futures can be generated to strengthen the rights and roles of Indonesian women at various levels of society.
3) **If** women parliamentarians acquire new leadership skills and knowledge of issues affecting women, **then** they will be taken more seriously in Parliament and take on more influential roles.
4) **If** trainers/facilitators from local women's organisations acquire new leadership training/coaching skills, **then** they will become agents of change and reform for greater gender equality in Indonesian society.

The resulting new theories of change were then used to provide greater and stronger connections between the various project components. Cumulatively, the revised theories of change and greater harmony amongst the activities resulted in a greater project impact that would have otherwise been possible with the initial project design.

Summative Evaluation

The Concept of Evaluability
If, at the end of a project, staff or donors would like to evaluate theories of change—or anything for that matter—it must be done so in a reliable and credible fashion that meets evaluation standards. 'Evaluability' is therefore the extent to which a project or programme (in this case, theories of change and/or assumptions) can be evaluated in accordance with the aforementioned standards.

Rick Davies has proposed a set of criteria for assessing the evaluability of theories of change. This criteria has not been fully tested and indeed is still in the process of being developed, but this does not discount the utility of the initial work. It should be remembered that just because a theory of change can be evaluated, does not mean it is a good theory of change.

Box 2: A possible list of criteria for assessing the evaluability of a Theory of Change[14]

Understandable	Inclusive
o Is the ToC understandable? o Do different people interpret the ToC in the same way? o Do different documents give consistent representations of the same ToC?	o Does the ToC encompass the diversity of contexts it is meant to cover?
Verifiable	Justifiable
o Are the events described in a way that could be verified?	o Is there evidence supporting the sequence of events in the ToC from past studies, previous projects, and/or from a situation analysis/baseline study?
Testable	Plausible
o Are there identifiable causal links between the events? Often there are not	o Where there is no prior evidence is the sequence of events plausible, given what is known about the intervention and the context?
Explained	Owned
o Are there explanations of how the causal connections are expected to work?	o How widely owned is the ToC?
Complete	Embedded
o Does the theory of change make clear connections between the 'If ... then' chain of events	o Are the contents of the ToC referred to in other documents that will help ensure that it is operationalized?

Approaches to Evaluation

There are many approaches to evaluation and some lend themselves more readily to the examination of theories of change.[15] Listed below are seven potential approaches to evaluation that either emphasize

[14] Rick Davies, "Criteria for assessing the evaluability of Theories of Change," Rick on the Road, 5 April 2012, accessed 25 September 2012, http://mandenews.blogspot.co.uk/2012/04/criteria-for-assessing-evaluablity-of.html

or include an assessment of theories of change. One approach, however, is distinct in the centrality in which theory of change is included: theory-based evaluation.

Theory-based Evaluation – Theory-based Evaluation helps assess whether underlying theories of change or assumptions of a programme are correct by identifying the causal linkages between different variables: from inputs to expected results. In a broad definition, any evaluation uncovering implicit or explicit assumptions, hypotheses or theories can be categorized as theory-based evaluation. "Advocates for this approach maintain that, by purposefully identifying the assumptions on which programs are based, the design, implementation, and subsequent utilization of the evaluation will be better."[16] This approach is particularly useful for learning and accountability as it allows for identifying whether the success, failure or mixed results of the intervention was due to programme theories and assumptions, or implementation.

Any theory-based evaluation must begin with an identification of the theory(ies) and assumptions underlying the program. This may require additional steps if the theory(ies) of change are not already explicit or if they need revision. If the theory(ies) of change are not explicit, the evaluator should bring all possible theories to the fore through a participatory process, and then determine collaboratively with key stakeholders the theory(ies) to be tested during the evaluation. Keep in mind that the purpose of the evaluation will guide the selection of which theory(ies) will be tested.

Pitfalls to this approach may occur when the theory(ies) are "elementary, simplistic, partial, or even outright wrong."[17] It is therefore critical that the theory(ies) are presented in a way which readily lend themselves to evaluation. For further details on 'good' theories of change, see Part I of this guidance.

Most Significant Change – Most Significant Change (MSC) is a participatory monitoring and evaluation technique that provides information on impact and outcomes of an intervention that can be used to assess the performance of the intervention as a whole. The essence of the MSC approach is a systematic identification and investigation of observed significant changes in the environment. What differentiates the MSC approach from conventional evaluation approaches is that it uses an inductive approach, whereby intervention participants 'make sense' of events after they have happened, while conventional approaches would use predetermined indicators, based on prior conceptions or theories, for the explicitly intended change.

Developmental Evaluation – Developmental Evaluation (DE) supports the process of innovation within an organization and its activities by pairing an evaluator with a programme throughout the project cycle for continuous monitoring and evaluation for programme improvement. It "emerged in response to the need to support real-time learning and adaptation in complex and emergent situations", and is specifically "designed to capture system dynamics and surface innovative strategies and ideas."[18]
Within DE, theories of change can be reconstructed when the evidence suggests that the theory is not working as thought in the design phase. By comparing older models of change to newer ones within the same programme, one can gain valuable information and insights about how theories and the environment have evolved.

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[15] Good summaries of different evaluation approaches can be found in the OECD DAC Guidance on Evaluating Conflict Prevention and Peacebuilding Activities and in Cheyanne Church and Mark Roger's *Designing for Results*.
[16] Church and Rogers, *Designing for Results*, p. 119.
[17] C.H. Weiss, "Theory-based evaluation: Past, present, and future," *New Directions for Evaluation*, 76, 1997, p. 51.
[18] Elizabeth Dozios, Marc Langlois, Natasha Blanchet-Cohen, DE 201: A Practitioner's Guide to Developmental Evaluation, The J.W. McConnell Family Foundation and the International Institute for Child Rights and Development, 2010, accessed 26 September 2012, http://dmeforpeace.org/learn/de-201-practitioners-guide-developmental-evaluation.

Outcome Mapping – Outcome Mapping (OM) "recognizes that [change] is essentially about people relating to each other and their environment."[19] It therefore shifts away from assessing the impacts and/or products of a programme to focusing on changes in behaviour, relationships, actions and activities in the people, groups, and organizations it works with directly (i.e., outcomes). OM suggests that in order to bring about impact, there must be changes in the behaviour, relationships, actions and activities in the people, groups, and organizations that the intervention works with directly.

Impact Evaluation – There are several definitions of impact evaluation in the field of development. The most common definition relates to the OECD DAC criteria: "Impact evaluation is the systematic identification of the effects—positive or negative, intended or unintended—on individual households, institutions, and the environment caused by a… program or project."[20] It can be an experimental or quasi-experimental design with a mixed methods approach, but frequently emphasizes quantitative data. An impact evaluation that includes theory of change review (i.e., theory-based impact evaluation) seeks to identify *why* the change occurred, rather than just if the intervention had an impact. Six key principles for theory-based impact evaluation are: [21]
1. Map out the causal chain (programme theory)
2. Understand context
3. Anticipate heterogeneity
4. Rigorous evaluation of impact using a credible counterfactual
5. Rigorous factual analysis
6. Use mixed methods

Impact Evaluations can also be defined as an evaluation that takes place several months and years after a project has been concluded. The purpose of conducting an evaluation post-implementation is to determine which changes have become sustainable and produce long-term impact on a complex environment. It seeks to determine "the change in the conflict (or crime) catalysed by the project."[22] This type of approach enables the evaluator to make recommendations on which theories of change in complex environments contributed to the resolution of the conflict or problem and helped to bring about peace.

Empowerment Evaluation – "Empowerment evaluation aims to increase the probability of achieving program success by 1) providing program stakeholders with tools for planning, implementation, and self-evaluation of their program, and 2) mainstreaming evaluation as part of the planning and management of the program/organization."[23] It aims to help improve organizations achieve results by improving their capacity to do evaluation and use evaluation results to improve strategies. It is a learn-by-doing process that aims for an organization to be able to evaluate its strategies without the assistance of an external empowerment evaluator.[24] Empowerment evaluation can, therefore, include

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[19] Sarah Earl, Fred Carden and Terry Smutylo, *Outcome Mapping: Building Learning and Reflection into Development Programs*, International Development Resource Centre, 2001, p. 2.

[20] World Bank, "OED and Impact Evaluation-A Discussion Note," World Bank, accessed 26 September 2012, http://www.worldbank.org/ieg/docs/world_bank_oed_impact_evaluations.pdf.

[21] Howard White, "Theory-Based Impact Evaluation: Principles and Practice," International Initiative for Impact Evaluation Working Paper 3, International Initiative for Impact Evaluation, June 2009, accessed 26 September 2012, http://www.3ieimpact.org/media/filer/2012/05/07/Working_Paper_3.pdf.

[22] Cheyanne Church and Mark M. Rogers, *Designing for Results: Integrating Monitoring and Evaluation in Conflict Transformation Programs*, (Washington, DC: Search for Common Ground, 2006).

[23] Pamela Cox, et al., *Evaluation for Improvement : A Seven-Step Empowerment Evaluation Approach for Violence Prevention Organizations* (National Center for Injury Prevention and Control and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2009, 11). Quoted in http://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/pdf/evaluation_improvement-a.pdf.

[24] Centers for Disease Control, *Evaluation for Improvement: A Seven-Step Empowerment Evaluation Approach for Violence Prevention Organizations*, National Center for Injury Prevention and Control at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2009, accessed 25 September 2012, http://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/pdf/evaluation_improvement-a.pdf.

theories of change at the discretion of the organization utilizing the approach. A particular potential strength of empowerment evaluation and theories of change is the emphasis on developing internal organizational capacities for conducting future evaluations. In-house evaluators, technical DME units within INGOs, and donors could conduct evaluations analyse the different components of theories of change.

Whatever approach to evaluation is taken, it can be helpful to articulate other, or alternative, theories of change for a programme or project. The process of identifying other reasons for the change to have occurred or to not have occurred opens up new avenues to explore the theory of change's validity or lack thereof. This process can help in assessing and attributing results.

3   Limitations of theories of change and how to overcome them

3.1   *Theories of change statements can be one-dimensional and represent a linear approach when, in reality, change depends on many preconditions and is frequently non-linear.*

Theories of change statements are highly contingent on a range of factors being in place for a change to happen. Social change can be complex and unpredictable and, some would argue, often cannot be reduced to simple linear 'If …., then' statements.[25] Very often the effectiveness of a particular intervention and the validity of a theory of change rests on issues that are far removed from a project's scope and influence—these are, after all, complex environments. Nevertheless, any intervention will likely contain a variety of elements that are simple, complicated, and/or complex (see Section II.i Making Theories of Change Explicit for Monitoring and Evaluation). Identifying what is simple, complicated and/or complex in the intervention will help you structure your M&E activities and allocate resources accordingly.

Also, if the theories are not expressed well, remain vague, or are used in the wrong context, or if the sensitivity of the issues being addressed makes it difficult to discuss and articulate theories of change openly, then it is likely the theories will not be relevant to the context or useful in guiding activities. It is possible to target the wrong group, or choose the wrong activity, or only partially address an issue. Using theories of change does not remove the possibility of errors, but rather makes it easier to identify the gaps in a project's logic.

Nevertheless there are several strategies, as outlined in Part I of this guidance, to address the supposed one-dimensionality of theories of change.

First, any one project, programme or strategy will have multiple theories of change. Clearly articulating these theories and their inter-linkages is a key step in finding the various factors and influences that might affect your ability to achieve the desired results. Related to this is the identification of key theories and assumptions that are crucial to the achievement of the desired results and the subsequent development of a data collection strategy that tracks key indicators relating to theory accuracy. You might even consider developing a systems map of your theories of change, their assumptions, and inter-linkages. This may assist in visualizing the hierarchy of theories and assumptions, and therefore the identification of the most crucial theories and assumptions that success, particularly at the strategic level, depends upon.

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[25] Reina Neufeldt, "'Frameworkers' and 'Circlers' – Exploring Assumptions in Impact Assessment," *Berghof Handbook for Conflict Transformation I and II*, 2007 and 2011, accessed 25 September 2012, http://dmeforpeace.org/learn/frameworkers-and-circlers-exploring-assumptions-impact-assessment.

Second, theories of change are more than simple 'if-then' statements. As testable hypotheses, we need theories of change to be as reflective of the actual environment as possible without overly complicating the situation. Clearly defining the boundaries of the theory and its assumptions is critical. Therefore, it is possible to include the logic behind the theory, in addition to the 'if-then' statement, by adding 'because'. This helps to further delineate the boundaries of the theory and its application.

If further complexity is required, however, it is also possible to add specific conditions under which the theory will be achieved. This would result in the following formula: 'if we do X, then Y, resulting in Z, then we will achieve A and B' (X + Y + Z = A and B).

But theories of change are just that—theories. They are useful in laying out a hypothesis, but in the face of countervailing evidence, alternative theories must be developed for how an observed change can be explained.

3.2   *Not a panacea—theories of change must be used in conjunction with other tools and concepts*

Theories of change are not a solve-all panacea for challenges in design, monitoring and evaluation for conflict, crime and violence initiatives: they must be used in conjunction with other tools and concepts. The following tools can be used to inform and compliment theories of change, but keep in mind that this is not a definitive list of all possibilities:

- Logic and/or Results framework
- Conflict analysis
- Context analysis
- Baseline study
- Monitoring strategy
- Data collection strategy
- Indicators and indicator systems
- Evaluation approaches and methodologies

For example, a theory is likely to face difficulties if it is not informed by thorough and separate conflict and context analyses[26] Given the importance of such analyses, it is essential for NGOs and donors to devote resources to ensure staff and partners can undertake proper and thorough analyses and are able to directly link those findings to intervention design, its underlying theories, and assumptions. Furthermore, conflict and context analysis must be periodically updated, specifically when there is a change in factors that may increase or decrease the likelihood of conflict or violence. If the conflict or context changes dramatically, then the theories of change of a project will also have to be revisited.

3.3   *Lack of Communication about Theories of Change.*

At times, programme designers have either implicit or explicit theories of change in mind, but do not communicate those to programme implementation groups (organisations or teams)—so people proceed on the basis of unstated and possibly competing theories. Theories of change need to be communicated and shared. They need to be seen as a collaborative tool. If you know what you want to achieve –that is, if you can clearly imagine and describe your ideal end state--theories of change will allow you to work your way backwards, seeing at each stage what needs to be accomplished so the next step can begin. Ensuring all partners are 'on the same page' for how change will be brought about, the conditions it is dependent upon, and the indications that 'all is well' is critical for success.

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[26] CDA Collaborative Learning Projects Inc., *Reflecting on Peace Practice: Participant Training Manual*, CDA Collaborative Learning Projects Inc., 2009, accessed 25 September 2012, http://dmeforpeace.org/learn/reflecting-peace-practice-project.

3.4   *Theories are not really tested, information to validate or disconfirm is not sought*

Gathering evidence to test theories of change can be difficult. A clearly articulated data collection plan and strategy for key theory of change indicators is therefore essential.

Monitoring and evaluation systems need to be designed to capture evidence on the 'then' or change part of the theories being evaluated as well as the 'If' part of the statement. For example, research carried out by CARE International UK cited one example that highlights this issue.[27] The theory stated that "If women occupy leadership positions inside given structures and institutions, then they will be able to bring other women into peacebuilding activities". Evidence was gathered of the empowerment process but the research did not conclusively prove how the women were now engaged in decision making bodies associated with conflict resolution or peace. The project focused on indicators of performance rather than indicators of change or assumptions. The research goes on to suggest that a clearly designed research plan for monitoring theories of change, as displayed in Annex B may add significant clarity and enable easier data and conclusion tracking.[28]

3.5   *Retrofitting theories of change at implementation, monitoring or evaluation stages, when they are not articulated in programme design*

Retrofitting theories of change post-design is a frequent practice—though certainly not a best practice. Nevertheless, the challenge remains: how can one accurately discern the original theory or theories behind the logic of an intervention when it is not made explicit in the intervention design? This challenge is compounded particularly when the theory has implicitly shifted throughout the intervention.

Making theories of change explicit post-design is complicated, but can be achieved and the process is not dissimilar to that of creating theories of change in the design phase.

1. **Desk review.** The first step is to review existing written documentation such as project proposal documents, conflict analysis, baseline study and communiques between partners. Based on the explicit information here, you should identify what you still need to know in order to develop a theory of change. Consider paying particular attention to whether the proposed activities will indeed 'add up' to the desired changes – and also look for gaps in both activities and the logic linking the various levels of the design or strategy hierarchy.

2. **Collect additional information.** Additional information beyond what is contained in the project documents may be required. In which case, key informant interviews are an excellent method for gathering this preliminary data. If there is disagreement amongst the key informants, however, then a focus group might be in order to bring key stakeholders to agreement on how change will occur.

3. **Propose a theory or theories of change.** Once all the relevant information has been identified, gathered, and analysed, you should be ready to propose a theory or theories of change retroactively. Consider seeking feedback from key stakeholders to ensure that you indeed understand the change process correctly.

4. **Revise indicators and M&E plans.** You may need to revise the M&E plan, indicators and data collection strategy given that the aforementioned elements of project design were not based on an explicit theory of change: there may be gaps or misaligned indicators as a result of the changes made the theories of change. It is therefore prudent to revisit the M&E plan to ensure that it accurately reflects the newly explicit theories of change.

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[27] CARE International UK, *Peacebuilding with Impact: Defining Theories of Change*, CARE International UK, January 2012, accessed 25 September 2012, http://dmeforpeace.org/learn/peacebuilding-impact-defining-theories-change.

[28] CARE International UK, *Guidance for designing, monitoring and evaluating peacebuilding projects: using theories of change*, CARE International UK, International Alert and the European Union, June 2012, accessed 25 September 2012, http://dmeforpeace.org/learn/guidance-designing-monitoring-and-evaluating-peacebuilding-projects-using-theories-change.

3.6   *Many field practitioners are not aware of the body of literature and research regarding some theories of change—and therefore continue to make unnecessary mistakes*

Many practitioners are not aware of the available material on theories of change and start from scratch using intuition and reinventing the wheel. Much wasted effort could be avoided if practitioners were made aware of the large body of literature that is available to draw on in forming theories of change and the conditions under which they are relevant and/or effective (see Annex A).

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Annex A. Further Resources

In addition to the resources provided in Part I of this document, you should be aware that there are many examples of theories of change that have been developed. You might like to review these to see how theories of change are framed. Some resources that you should be aware of include:

CARE International UK. *Guidance for Designing, Monitoring and Evaluating Peacebuilding Projects: Using Theories of Change.* CARE International UK, June 2012. Accessed 25 September 2012, http://dmeforpeace.org/learn/guidance-designing-monitoring-and-evaluating-peacebuilding-projects-using-theories-change.

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CARE International UK. *Theories of Change in Peacebuilding: Learning from the Experience of Peacebuilding Initiatives in Nepal.* CARE International UK, 2012. Accessed 25 September 2012, http://dmeforpeace.org/sites/default/files/CARE_ToCs%20in%20Peacebuilding%20Nepal.pdf.

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Annex B: The Monitoring and Evaluation Planning & Collection Grid

The following monitoring and evaluation planning and data collection grid examines the relationships between the 'if-then' part of the theory of change. It is used to design a research plan for monitoring and evaluating the theory or theories of change underlying a particular strategy, programme or project.

What is presented below is a brief summary of how the Grid can be used. For more detailed explanation, please see the original guidance produced by CARE UK.[29]

Column One: Theories of Change
In the first column list the theories of change on which you will focus. List only one theory of change per row.

Column Two: Lines of Inquiry
This column is where you develop and respond to your key lines of inquiry. For theories of change, your lines of inquiry will likely but not always be an investigation of key assumptions underlying the theories of change listed in column one.

Investigative questions are better when they are more rigorous. Ask probing questions with as much detail as possible, and avoid vague words such as 'capacity building', 'empower', and 'civil society'. State specifically who, what was developed, for what purpose, etc.

Column Three: Results Hierarchy
This column examines the internal logic of the theory of change – the 'because' statement: how does the theory of change contribute to its related results in the results hierarchy?

Once again, clearly state why you believe the theory of change will achieve this result. Giving the 'because' specific focus in this column prompts us to consider the evidence needed to assess the expected linkage between lower level and higher level results.

Consider the theory of change's internal validity: is the logic clear? Does the theory adequately explain how its lower-level results are expected to contribute to higher-level results?

Column Four: Evidence and Indicator Tracking
This column examines the evidence for the achievement of the two results linked together in the results hierarchy by the theory of change: what evidence exists to suggest that the theory of change is proving to be correct? Carefully note what indicators will allow you to measure to what extent the results are being or were achieved. These indicators can possibly be drawn from documents such as the proposal or logframe if the information is there. The indicators should also be discussed and agreed with project implementers and, if possible, key stakeholders.

Column Five: Adding Up
This column explores and tracks the connections between lower level results and their connections, if any, to higher level results. Do not simply state 'yes' or 'no': explain why you believe the results were achieved and analyse the strength and soundness of the connections between the design and results levels. This requires the clear identification of the expected higher-level result that is desired.

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[29] Adapted from: CARE International UK, *Guidance for designing, monitoring and evaluating peacebuilding projects: using theories of change*, CARE International UK, International Alert and the European Union, June 2012, accessed 25 September 2012, http://dmeforpeace.org/learn/guidance-designing-monitoring-and-evaluating-peacebuilding-projects-using-theories-change.

Column Six: Changes in Environment

This is the column to document external changes observed in the environment and how they could affect the success or failure of the theory of change. Were there external factors that could have affected the functioning of the theory of change? Has the environment changed such that the theory of change is no longer valid? There might have also have been a positive change could have affected the theory of change.

Column Seven: External Factors

This column explores alternative explanations for the result—what else could have caused the results observed? This column differs from column six in that it focuses on the *intended result* and not the theory of change. It also differs in that it does not focus on contextual change but actors and initiatives that could have contributed to the achievement or not of the result. You might also consider drawing on contribution analysis here.[30]

Column Eight: Reflection

This column is used to provide addition review and reflection on how the theory of change could be strengthened. If the theory was found to be insufficient or the result lacking, is there anything else that could have made or could make the theory more successful or strengthen it? This is particularly good for learning about the theory of change under review and enhancing critical thinking for future theory of change development.

This column differs from the previous one because it is asking about the theory of change, and not the result. Are there any other factors which could have contributed to the success or failure of the theory of change? Are we sure that it was our initiative alone that caused the theory of change to be successful? Were the initiatives of others that contributed in our theory of change being successful?

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[30] See for example, John Mayne, "Contribution Analysis: An Approach to Exploring Cause and Effect," ILAC Brief 16, Institutional Learning and Change Initiative, accessed 26 September 2012, http://dmeforpeace.org/sites/default/files/Mayne_Contribution%20Analysis.pdf.

The Monitoring and Evaluation Planning & Collection Grid							
1 Theory of change	2 Lines of inquiry based on assumptions	3 How does the ToC contribute to results in design hierarchy?	4 Evidence/Indicator Tracking	5 Did the lower level results 'add up'?	6 Were there changes in the context and/or conflict?	7 What other external factors could have contributed to the result?	8 What could have made the ToC and/or result more successful?
Theory of change 1	Assumption Indicator 1	[insert 'because' part of 'if-then' statement]	Performance indicator 1	Adding up indicator 1	[narrative]	[narrative]	[narrative]
Theory of change 2	Assumption Indicator 2		Performance indicator 2	Adding up indicator 2			