



## COLOPHON

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Authors: Marjan van Es (Hivos)  
Irene Guijt (iguijt@learningbydesign.org)  
Isabel Vogel (info@isabelvogel.co.uk)

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This guide builds on the work of a ToC Learning Group initiated by Hivos and comprising the authors, Iñigo Retolaza Eguren, and staff of the Centre for Development Innovation (CDI) of Wageningen University and Research Centre.

The authors have drawn inspiration from the work of other ToC thinkers they have worked with over the years, among whom are Maureen O'Flynn, Hettie Walters and Cathy James. We stand on the shoulders of others.

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### Contact information

Hivos  
P.O. Box 85565  
2508 CG The Hague,  
The Netherlands  
<http://www.hivos.org>  
email: [info@hivos.org](mailto:info@hivos.org)

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## **ACRONYMS**

<b>Hivos</b>	Humanist Institute for Co-operation with Developing Countries
<b>DMEL</b>	Design, Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning
<b>Logframe</b>	Logical framework
<b>MEL</b>	Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning
<b>ToA</b>	Theory of Action
<b>ToC</b>	Theory of Change

**The voyage of discovery**  
is not in seeking  
*new landscapes* but in  
having *new eyes*

(Marcel Proust)

**PART A**

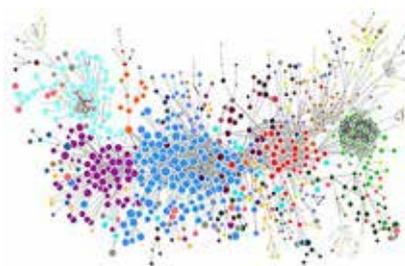
**CONCEPTS  
AND  
DEFINITION**

# 1 INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 HIVOS AND THEORY OF CHANGE

Hivos aims for structural, systemic change that enables all citizens – both women and men – to participate actively and equally in the decision-making processes that determine their lives, their society and their future. Consequently, Hivos staff and partner organisations engage in complex social processes.

Change emerges as a result of the simultaneous push and pull of multiple political, cultural and social forces involving many individuals and entities. Social change processes are complex and characterised by non-linear feedback loops: our own actions interact with those of others and a myriad of influencing factors. This triggers reactions that cannot be foreseen and makes outcomes of change interventions unpredictable.



Given these uncertainties, how can we plan strategically and sensibly? How can social change initiatives move forward in emerging change processes in a flexible way, while remaining focused on the goal?

In this context of complexity, Hivos values working with theory of change (ToC) as an appropriate approach to guide its strategic thinking and action, as well as its collaborative action with others. The use of a ToC approach fosters critical questioning of all aspects of change interventions and supports adaptive planning and management in response to diverse and quickly changing contexts. It contributes to the quality and transparency of strategic thinking, and therefore to personal, organisational and social learning. Use of a ToC approach should make Hivos more effective in achieving its goals, and enable it to understand better why and under which conditions specific strategies might work for specific groups in society.

## 1.2 ORIGIN OF THE GUIDELINES

This guide has evolved from experimentation with and learning about theory of change thinking and its use in practice, which started in 2007. The approach presented here has been developed over time in a series of workshops with Hivos staff, partner organisations and consultants in all regions where Hivos is active. These guidelines have benefited greatly from the feedback of participants.

In 2010, Hivos established a Theory of Change Learning Group, to consolidate learning from practice. The ToC Learning Group members varied over the years, but key participants have been the authors of this guide: Marjan van Es, Irene Guijt and Isabel Vogel, with Iñigo Retolaza Eguren and staff of the Centre for Development Innovation (CDI) of Wageningen University and Research Centre.

Important milestones in the learning process were the publication of the guide 'Theory of Change - A thinking and action approach to navigate in the complexity of social change processes', written by Iñigo Retolaza Eguren (2011), and the launch of Hivos Theory of Change Resource Portal (2012). This portal is now hosted by CDI: [www.theoryofchange.nl](http://www.theoryofchange.nl).

## 1.3 USE OF THE GUIDELINES

This guide aims to support Hivos staff in applying a ToC approach as intended and set out in Hivos' policy brief: 'Hivos and Theory of Change'.<sup>1</sup>

A theory of change approach can be used for different purposes, by different users, and at different moments in the cycle of developing, monitoring, reviewing or evaluating a programme or strategy. Table 1 gives an overview of the relevance of the chapters for different uses and user groups.

**Part A** introduces theory of change and Hivos' perspective on ToC thinking: what it is, what you should know before you start, and key features of ToC thinking that you need to understand in order to be able to use the approach effectively and reap the benefits of the process. 'Theory of Change' as a term is used by an increasing number of organisations and demanded by donors, but is not always understood in the same way. Hivos has developed its own understanding of the process and what good quality ToC work is all about. All users who are not fully acquainted with a ToC approach and/or are new to Hivos will benefit from reading this part.

**Part B** is a stepwise approach to guide you through the process of developing a ToC for different purposes. Here you will find also information on how to use specific tools recommended for each step. This is the most practical part of the document.

Part B also includes ideas for a ToC Quality Audit that can be used to check whether all the necessary components are elaborated with sufficient quality. Such an audit is useful in two situations. First, for staff responsible for assessing proposals, either from partner organisations to Hivos, or from Hivos to other donors. It can also be used as an extra check at the end of a ToC design process by the team involved in the process. Second, for those involved in the review of the ToC of an ongoing intervention.

**Part C** contains references to tools suggested in Part B, as well as resources and sites where you can find more information about ToC use. This material will enable you to dive deeper in specific aspects of ToC, find appropriate tools for your purpose as well as updates and experiences of how others use ToC.

This guide does not elaborate on how to facilitate the process of developing a ToC. You will find some (links to) resources related to facilitation in section 8.3.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://hivos.org/policy-brief-hivos-and-theory-change-2014>

**TABLE 1: HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE**

USERS	USE	PURPOSE OF TOC PROCESS	OPTIONS FOR USE	POINTS OF ATTENTION
<b>Programme staff with little or no experience in ToC thinking and use</b>	Ch. 1 – 6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Programme design</li> <li>• Strategy revision</li> <li>• Quality review of existing programme</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To familiarise yourself with the approach</li> <li>• To prepare for participation in a (facilitated) ToC process, or a ToC review or learning session</li> <li>• To refer back to when you are involved in the development of a funding proposal</li> </ul>	For this user group, a ToC process needs to be facilitated. The facilitator can ask the team members/ participants to read specific parts of the guidelines to prepare themselves and explain other parts her/ himself during the process.
<b>Programme staff with reasonable or advanced experience in ToC thinking and use</b>	Ch. 3 - 7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Programme design</li> <li>• Strategy revision</li> <li>• Quality review of existing programme</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To prepare for participation in a ToC process, or a ToC review or learning session</li> <li>• To refer back to when you are involved in the development of a funding proposal</li> </ul>	Refer back to other parts of the guidelines when you feel uncertain, if a previous process has become stuck, or if you encounter questions that are difficult to answer.
<b>DMEL (Design, Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning) staff</b>	Ch. 4 - 8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Programme design</li> <li>• Strategy revision</li> <li>• Quality review of existing programme</li> <li>• Strategic learning design</li> <li>• Collaboration in a multi-actor initiative</li> <li>• Scaling up and scaling out</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To prepare for the facilitation of and/or other support to a ToC process for all purposes mentioned</li> <li>• To support the development or improvement of MEL frameworks and processes</li> <li>• To give feedback to draft proposals, and learning strategies</li> <li>• To give guidance to reflection and learning processes, documentation, and reporting for accountability.</li> </ul>	Refresh your sense and understanding of ToC quality every time you prepare the process. Reflect on what did not work well last time (and why), identify options for improvement this time. Seek inspiration and ideas beyond these guidelines. A ToC process should always be tailored to your purpose: ask yourself what the process and the team needs: which approach, which tools, etc.

**TABLE 1: HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE**

<b>ToC process facilitators</b>	Ch. 4 - 5 Ch. 8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Programme design</li> <li>• Strategy revision</li> <li>• Quality review of existing programme</li> <li>• Strategic learning design</li> <li>• Collaboration in a multi-actor initiative</li> <li>• Scaling up or out</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To prepare for the facilitation of a ToC process for all purposes mentioned</li> </ul>	<p>Refresh your sense and understanding of ToC quality every time you prepare the process. Reflect on what did not work well last time (and why), identify options for improvement this time. Seek inspiration and ideas beyond these guidelines. A ToC process should always be tailored to your purpose: ask yourself what the process and the team needs: which approach, which tools, etc.</p>
<b>Quality management staff</b>	Ch. 7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Quality review of funding proposal</li> <li>• Quality review of existing programme</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To check the quality and comprehensiveness of funding proposal being submitted, and provide feedback to the team</li> </ul>	<p>Use the audit to highlight inconsistencies and caveats and to question the depth of thinking. Refer back to other parts of the guidelines when you are not sure whether a criterion or question is relevant and appropriate, and sufficiently answered.</p>
<b>Evaluators (and staff commissioning evaluations)</b>	Ch. 1 - 7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Evaluation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To familiarise themselves with Hivos' understanding of ToC</li> <li>• To design and prepare for evaluation processes (and/or Terms of Reference)</li> </ul>	<p>Always include a component on validating or reconstructing the ToC of the project or programme. Use the quality standards to check if the existing ToC is good enough or if it needs improving.</p>

## LANGUAGE USED

A brief word about the language in the guide is needed for clarity.

When the authors provide information or an explanation, they address the user(s) of the guidelines, primarily Hivos staff, with 'you'. The stepwise approach is structured around a number of questions the users are encouraged to ask themselves. Therefore, the authors chose to use 'we' in the questions, with 'we' being Hivos staff and partners or allies who should ask and answer these questions before moving on.

The authors make a distinction between 'stakeholders' and 'actors'. A stakeholder is a person or entity that has a concern in the initiative or the change process and an interest in its success, and could win or lose. The term 'actor' is used for a person or entity that has an influence in the envisaged change process, but may be indifferent to its success, or even ignorant of the change initiative or process.

Hivos uses the term 'project' for an initiative with a clearly defined objective, project plan, duration and resources. A 'programme' is larger in scope and scale, may comprise several projects and has a longer time perspective.

# 2 THEORY OF CHANGE

## 2.1 WHAT ARE THEORIES OF CHANGE?

'Theories' of change are the ideas and beliefs people have – consciously or not – about why and how the world and people change. How people perceive and understand change and the world around them is infused by their underlying beliefs about life, human nature and society. They are deep drivers of people's behaviour and of the choices they make.

These beliefs are formed by different aspects of people's lives:

- class, gender, religion, the history of their family, the values they have been brought up with;
- history, culture and context of where they live;
- personal life experiences and their different identities in different settings;
- formal education and – where relevant – their knowledge of academic social theories.

People's position in society and their personal beliefs and values shape their mental models and inform their own 'theories of change'. For actors involved in social change work, these mental models influence the role they see for themselves (and their group or organisation) and the strategies they choose.

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### **BOX 1: HIVOS' DEFINITION OF THEORIES OF CHANGE**

Theories of change are the ideas and hypotheses ('theories') people and organisations have about how change happens. These theories can be conscious or unconscious and are based on personal beliefs, assumptions and a necessarily limited, personal perception of reality.

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### **WHAT IS A TOC APPROACH?**

Theory of change as an approach is a *guiding framework for all stages of thinking, action and sense-making* when we intervene intentionally in social change processes.

For Hivos, theory of change is a process-oriented approach to analysing the complex systems in which we and our partners and allies work, and for planning actions we think will influence parts of the system in a positive way. The process helps us navigate in unpredictable and complex processes and to track changes in the system to which our interventions may have contributed.

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## BOX 2: DEFINITIONS OF THEORY OF CHANGE THAT ARE IN LINE WITH HIVOS' VIEW

- Theory of change is an ongoing process of reflection to explore change and how it happens - and what that means for the part we play in a particular context, sector and/or group of people. *(Cathy James, Comic Relief Theory of Change Review, 2011)*
  - Every programme is packed with beliefs, assumptions and hypotheses about how change happens – about the way humans work, or organisations, or political systems, or ecosystems. Theory of change is about articulating these many underlying assumptions about how change will happen in a programme. *(Patricia Rogers, in 'Review of the use of 'Theory of Change' in international development', Isabel Vogel, 2012)*
- 

Hivos distinguishes between ToC as a **way of thinking** (overall approach), a **process** (doing a ToC analysis/enquiry) and a **product** (the result of a ToC process).

- ToC is a thinking and action approach to navigate the complexity of social change. It is a way of looking at the world that calls on and fosters people's capacities for critical questioning, not taking things for granted, dealing with uncertainties, and acknowledging the inevitability of diverse perspectives.
- ToC is a process. If used well, a ToC enquiry is an ongoing process of analysis and reflection. It is not a one-off exercise in the design phase of a programme, but rather involves an ongoing action-learning cycle.
- A ToC is also a product because a ToC enquiry results in specific outcomes – in a narrative and/or visual form – that represent the theory of change of an organisation, a team, or a project or programme. It is a 'living' product because it will change over time. A ToC is a temporary snapshot, a reflection of the thinking at a specific moment, which will not and does not need to be complete. As a product, a theory of change offers a framework for sense-making that needs to be used, revisited and adapted as the project or programme moves on, other actors come in, changes in the context occur and learning takes place.

## DIFFERENCE BETWEEN TOC AND LOGFRAME

The Logframe (short for Logical Framework Approach<sup>2</sup>) is a management instrument widely used in the development sector for planning, monitoring and evaluation. The terminology used in Logframe and ToC approaches is similar but there are important distinctions. How do ToC and the Logframe relate - and differ?

As explained above, ToC starts from the premise that social change processes are complex and unpredictable, that different perspectives exist on what needs to change and why, and that a full analysis of the context of a change intervention and of the assumptions underlying its design are crucial to enhance its chance of success.

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<sup>2</sup> <http://betterevaluation.org/evaluation-options/Logframe>.

Logframe is driven largely by its form – a matrix structure. This matrix encourages linear thinking about change. Language used and associated with the Logframe, such as ‘planning’ and ‘delivering’ results, suggests project implementers are in control of the situation and can predict or promise what will happen over time. The three result levels of the Logframe leave no room for intermediate steps. This pushes the users to make wide conceptual leaps and does not encourage them to question the feasibility and plausibility of the envisaged change process. There is limited attention for assumptions underlying the strategic thinking and assumed causal relations between result levels.

Despite these differences, the approaches can be used together. Many donors ask for proposals that contain Logframes for planning, monitoring and evaluation. When a team conducts a full ToC analysis in the design phase, it will have all the information needed to develop a Logframe that is as realistic as possible.

However, this guide encourages taking monitoring and evaluation further than just monitoring in order to meet the information needs of the Logframe-based proposal. It will benefit the programme or project immensely if the team uses the full ToC as the basis for tracking and learning about the change processes as they unfold, and for strategic reflection. Doing so will also provide the information and arguments to explain necessary adaptations to the donor.

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### **BOX 3: DIFFERENT UNDERSTANDINGS OF THE TERM ‘THEORY OF CHANGE’**

#### **Perspective 1:**

ToC is seen and used as an improved logic model to better predict, plan and deliver results. Some critics call this understanding of ToC ‘Logframe on steroids’.

#### **Perspective 2:**

ToC is seen and used as a critical, multi-stakeholder exploration of intentions, interests, power and gender relations, in order to contribute to social justice, equality, sustainable development. The key question is ‘What change, for whom, why – and who says so?’

Hivos supports the second perspective on ToC:

- ToC is not about ‘predicting change’. ToC is our own narrative of change, a hypothetical projection of the future. It is full of assumptions and based on values, political choices, and on what we know at this moment. It does not predict that the change process will evolve in that way, nor can it promise to deliver intended outcomes.
- ToC is an approach that enables individuals and organisations involved in change processes to:
  - better understand the system they are part of without oversimplifying it, in order to support change in a strategic and responsive way;
  - to learn from how the process evolves in reality, so that strategies can be reviewed and adjusted along the way.

**TABLE 2: COMPARING AND CONTRASTING THEORY OF CHANGE AND LOGFRAME**

THEORY OF CHANGE	LOGFRAME
Critical thinking, room for complexity and deep questioning	Linear representation of change, simplifies reality
Explanatory: A ToC articulates and explains the what, how, and why of the intended change process, and the contribution of the initiative	Descriptive: A Logframe states only what is thought will happen / 'will' be achieved
Pathways of Change, 'unlimited' and parallel result chains or webs, feedback mechanisms	Three result levels (output, outcome, impact)
Ample attention for the plausibility of assumed causal relations	Suggests causal relations between results levels without analysing and explaining these
Articulates assumptions underlying the strategic thinking of the design of a policy, programme or project	Focuses on assumptions about external conditions

## 2.2 WHY A THEORY OF CHANGE APPROACH?

A theory of change approach entails that people and organisations involved in intentional change processes explore and make explicit their theories of change and the assumptions underlying their thinking. This exploration includes clarifying how they see cause-effect relations between their actions and the intended changes.

Why is this important? In a multi-stakeholder setting, the people involved may well have different views on what the desired change is, why it is desired and how it could and should happen. If these different views are not shared, misunderstandings can arise and stakeholders may start off on the wrong foot when working together. A joint ToC exploration can help to understand what drives each stakeholder and how they understand the situation. It helps identify common ground for action, as well as opportunities and obstacles. It lays the basis for collaboration with clear definition of roles and responsibilities as well as for joint monitoring, evaluation and learning processes.



In an organisation or team, exploring existing theories of change will contribute to a more shared understanding of organisational purpose, core values and strategic choices. This, in turn, lays the foundation for more consistent programme implementation. In most organisations, a difference can be observed between the theory of change as reflected in formal policy documents and the practice on the ground. Mapping out the theory of change and underlying assumptions can help to make these differences explicit, to stimulate

discussions about why they exist and to align formal policy and actual practice. A ToC analysis can also help to narrow the gap between the often ambitious change goals of an organisation and its actual potential, as it leads to more realistic objectives and more appropriate strategies.

Consequently, an effective ToC process always involves a dialogue about existing understandings of how change can happen. As this will challenge everyone involved to take a broader perspective, a ToC process can be confrontational for individuals and organisations. It may uncover structural inconsistencies or contradictions between 'the walk and the talk'; for example, in the way power is exercised in an organisation or paternalistic behaviour towards marginalised groups.

## 2.3 CORE COMPONENTS OF A TOC PROCESS AND PRODUCT

There are multiple ways to develop theories of change, depending on purpose, stakeholders involved, specific preferences or needs, capacities and available time. The field-testing of ToC processes with Hivos staff and partners (see 1.2) have resulted in seven core components and key questions to be addressed in a full ToC process and product. This guide offers a stepwise approach to develop these components of a ToC process, as explained in Chapter 5.

1. What is the desired change, why and for whom?
2. Analysis of the system and the current situation:
  - context analysis: social, political, economic, ecological and other dimensions
  - stakeholder and actor analysis
  - power and gender dynamics, drivers of change, opportunities for change
3. Mapping pathways of change:
  - Who and what needs to change in order to realise the longer-term desired change?
  - How do we think the change process might evolve from where we are now?
4. The assumptions underlying our theory of change:
  - What do we assume about the needs, interests and behaviour of stakeholders and other key actors?
  - What do we assume about cause-effect relations in the logic of the change pathways?
5. Strategic options:
  - What is the best way for the organisation or project to contribute, what should its role be? (position, capacity, added value)
  - What do others do? Is there a need and opportunities for multi-actor collaboration?
6. Strategic planning for the project period (theory of action)
7. Monitoring, evaluation and learning framework and process:
  - How to document the change process?
  - What to monitor and how?
  - Learning agenda
  - When and how to revisit the ToC and reflect on what works?

## 2.4 THEORIES OF CHANGE AT DIFFERENT LEVELS

Theory of change is used for thinking about change at different levels, ranging from world views to project level theories of change.

The broadest level at which the term is used refers to what some call ‘worldview’ theories of change<sup>3</sup>. People have ideas about how social change happens, assuming, for example, that positive change happens through democratisation processes and political contestation; through economic growth; through building organisations, strengthening civil society and citizen agency; or through individual awareness and empowerment. These theories and beliefs are political in nature and grounded in personal histories and socio-cultural factors. But they are also based on and influenced by social and political theories and research.

In developing theories of change in a professional setting, such as in Hivos, three other levels of ToC thinking can be distinguished. Figure 1 illustrates how these different levels relate to each other.

The organisational level refers to Hivos’ overarching theories of change. A general policy or longer-term strategic plan should contain a ToC that answers questions such as: What analysis do we, as an organisation, make of what needs to change in the world and why? How do we think social transformation happens and how do we see our role in it? Why do we choose to work on specific themes and why do we make certain strategic choices? Which values, analyses and key assumptions are underlying our thinking?

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**NB** The analyses and theories of individual staff members will clearly not always coincide fully with the formal organisational view. Revisiting organisational policies and strategies based on new insights and questioning by staff members and other stakeholders will ensure a dynamic policy process, renewal and innovation. In order to maintain shared ownership and consistency in implementation, these review processes must be organised in ways that enable all staff members to contribute meaningfully to the process.

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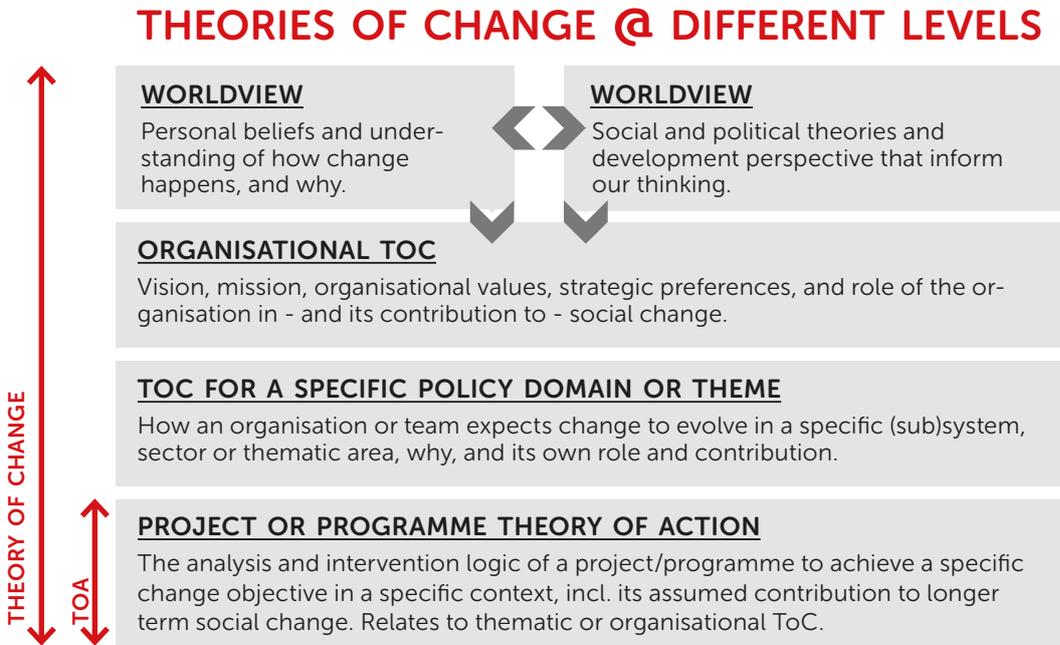
**A policy domain or thematic level** seeks to define a ToC for a specific theme or area of Hivos work, for example for Sexual & Reproductive Health & Rights, or Renewable Energy. A ToC for a policy domain builds on the vision, values and overall strategic choices of the organisational ToC. This level looks at questions such as ‘Why is this theme or policy area critical – and what kinds of people should benefit? What do we consider to be the main drivers and obstacles of change? What are the strategies we consider most effective for making progress on these themes and why, and what is Hivos’ role in these strategies? A policy domain or thematic ToC can be specified further for a regional or country context.

**A programme or project level** ToC is largely derived from the ToC of the related (thematic) policy domain, but is made context-specific. For example, a ToC of a Biogas programme in Indonesia, or a project advocating LGBTI rights in Kenya. It zooms in on specific objectives

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<sup>3</sup> Eyben, R., Kidder, T., Rowlands, J., and Bronstein, A. (2008). ‘Thinking about change for development practice: a case study from Oxfam UK’, *Development in Practice*, 18(2).

and strategies for a defined period of time. It is based on the outcomes of a sound analysis of the current context, actors, opportunities, as well as the objectives and priorities of Hivos or a back donor. To make a distinction with the other levels of ToC mentioned above, Hivos prefers to call a ToC at this level a **Theory of Action**. But most actors in Hivos' field of work use the term ToC at project or programme level too.



**Figure 1:** Different levels at which a ToC process can be aimed

## 2.5 USING TOC THINKING FOR DIFFERENT PURPOSES

ToC thinking and the stepwise approach offered in this guide can be used for different purposes and at all stages of a project, programme or initiative. A ToC process is most effective when tailored to suit your purpose, so agreeing about the purpose prior to starting is critical. The purpose also influences who needs to be involved in the process. You will see that Step 1 in Chapter 5 starts with clarifying the purpose. The most common purposes of ToC thinking are described below.

### PROGRAMME OR PROJECT DESIGN

A ToC process for programme or project design takes place as part of the preparation or inception phase. It entails a broad analysis of the system that needs transformation, identifying and involving key actors, initial programme design and strategic choices, and identifying critical assumptions. It forms the basis for adaptive management and monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL) during implementation. The ToC products are used for internal and external communication about the initiative.

### REVIEW AND/OR QUALITY AUDIT OF AN EXISTING INITIATIVE

A ToC process for the review or quality audit of an existing programme or project aims to improve its quality, to revisit and sharpen strategies, to clarify underlying assumptions and to adjust strategies and operational aspects to changed realities. The outcomes of the review may be used to adapt plans and implementation, to improve the MEL process or framework,

and to support communication about the programme and its results. A review can also be undertaken to prepare for a new phase of an initiative.

## **STRATEGIC LEARNING DESIGN AND KNOWLEDGE GENERATION**

A ToC process is an effective way to identify knowledge gaps, and learning or research questions. It helps create a structure to build an evidence base about what works or not, for who and why, and under which conditions. In particular, the assumptions identified in all steps of the process offer entry points for questioning, documenting and monitoring of what we think will happen and what happens in reality. The ToC analysis also helps to identify who should participate in the learning process.

## **EVALUATION**

A programme or project ToC provides a good basis for a mid-term review or an ex-post evaluation, as it makes explicit what the initiative aimed to achieve, why and how it was supposed to work, and key assumptions made. The evaluation will seek to substantiate the validity of the ToC, offering important information and insights for a possible next phase design or for learning with similar initiatives. The findings contribute to the body of knowledge on the topic of intervention, for example, the role of women in conflict resolution. Evaluation findings based on a clear ToC provide a sound basis for accountability to funding agencies, either by evidencing the initiative's contribution to the overall goal or offering in-depth and relevant lessons learned.

If an initial ToC has not been developed for the initiative, then the evaluation can start with reconstructing its implicit ToC. This offers a good base for the evaluation and will support an improved and shared understanding of the initiative by the team and other stakeholders. This in itself often leads to improvement of implementation and/or a next phase.

## **MULTI-ACTOR COLLABORATION AND COLLECTIVE IMPACT MONITORING**

For a multi-actor initiative, jointly undertaking a ToC process is critical in order to come to shared understanding, decision-making and ownership of the initiative design and operations. An important product of such a ToC is a collective MEL process and framework for impact monitoring, a condition for joint learning and demonstrating success. In practice, aligning the systems and MEL practices of the different partners in the project for collective impact monitoring often proves challenging. The ToC process can help to define clear and agreed roles and responsibilities of each actor involved.

## **SCALING UP AND SCALING OUT**

A ToC process can help Hivos or its partners to analyse the suitability and feasibility of replicating or scaling up and/or out an initiative in a different context. The results will provide insights into the need to adapt the ToC, why and in what way, and will identify assumptions that need to be tested in the new context.

# 3 KEY FEATURES OF A THEORY OF CHANGE PROCESS

## 3.1 FROM COMPLEXITY TO FOCUS AND BACK

Engaging with social transformation means understanding and navigating complex systems (see Box 4). ToC thinking helps us navigate by developing a manageable conceptual model of a system without oversimplifying it.

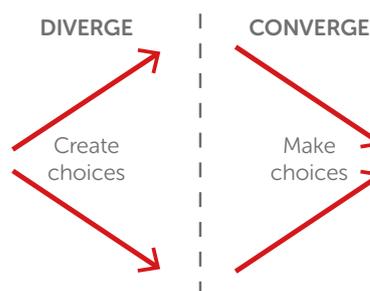
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*Beware of falling into the trap of believing that a model replaces reality!*

---

A theory of change process starts with an extensive exploration of the system of interest. We create the big picture, exploring and understanding as best as possible the components and factors that make the system what it is and how it functions. Then, we make a series of informed strategic choices, ultimately leading to concrete, context-specific interventions. In order to make sure that the intervention is actually contributing to and remains relevant for the envisaged change, we zoom in and out of the bigger picture regularly, in the design process as well as the implementation phase. We must be alert to timely and effective switching between the broader thinking and the focus and clarity we need for decision-making and implementation, and back.

A ToC process is typically a process of first diverging and then converging. It starts with brainstorming and in-depth exploration. To reap the full benefits of this phase we must try to be as open as possible, to expand our thinking and to step out of our comfort zone. The more we challenge ourselves and each other, the richer the thinking will be, with more potentially innovative and effective outcomes.



However, in order to move towards an actionable intervention we need to focus again. We bring diverse ideas together, prioritise strategic options, identify concrete and feasible opportunities, consider capacity and resources. The rich insights generated from the ToC process – shared information, insights, ideas and questions – need to be translated into a project design with realistic objectives and clear pathways of change.

The risk at that moment is to simplify too much and fall back into linear thinking. A similar challenge is keeping the rich thinking of the design stage active and shared throughout implementation. To achieve that, we need to actively use our bigger picture ToC to maintain the connection between interventions and their origins in the broader thinking about change.



## 3.2 MAKING ASSUMPTIONS EXPLICIT

Our thinking about development and change is based on multiple assumptions about what triggers change. We make assumptions about how change processes 'work', about the context in which it takes place and about what will happen as a result of interventions.

### WHAT IS AN ASSUMPTION?

An assumption is a belief or feeling that something is true or that something will happen, an assertion about the world we do not always question or check. Assumptions stem from and represent values, beliefs, norms and ideological perspectives that inform our interpretation and understanding of reality, and our expectations of what will happen. Assumptions are personal, but can also be part of collective convictions of a specific group having a similar social, cultural, political (etc.) background or history.

Assumptions are based in belief systems: notions and ideas that are so familiar or internalised that we take them for granted: 'Fish don't talk about the water'. Taken for granted, we may not be aware of making them and rarely question them. They are often reinforced because they frame how we see and understand the world, and how we interpret and give meaning to our personal experiences. We are all biased.

Our assumptions are not always valid. For example, we assume water will come out of the tap when we turn it on. We suddenly realise that this is an assumption when no water comes out and it raises a question about why this is happening. Surprises are therefore interesting eye-openers about implicit assumptions.

### WHY ARE ASSUMPTIONS IMPORTANT IN TOC THINKING?

Our personal beliefs and worldviews inform the assumptions underpinning the paradigms we uphold about how change happens and can best be achieved. One of Hivos' key assumptions, for example, is that social change occurs by citizens collectively demanding their rights and pushing for responsive government. Our assumptions lay the foundation for how we view the anticipated change process, and they influence the design of an initiative. Likewise, they inform our judgement about what is appropriate and feasible in the context where we support social change interventions.

Articulating assumptions in a ToC process as rigorously as possible generates entry points for checking, feedback and ongoing analysis to feed into the next round of action. Box 5 highlights specific benefits of clarifying assumptions in a ToC process.

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## BOX 5: WHY ASSUMPTIONS MATTER

### **More effective teams**

Personal and group values are surfaced, collective energy is generated, and differences are named and sometimes resolved. If not, they are noted and can be taken into account.

### **Improving design and innovation**

Identifying those assumptions that most affect success can help people wake up to new options for action, and to help them choose the most critical pathways on which to focus planning efforts. This helps us move beyond 'business as usual'.

### **More coordinated and focused action**

By articulating the different ways in which individuals and organisations assume change will take place, the group can come to a negotiated shared meaning that can help coordinate different actions.

### **Basis for adaptive management and risk management**

Monitoring outputs, assumptions and processes together enables you to respond in a timely manner to new information and adapt planning and strategies, and to decide on the most strategic next steps to take in complex contexts/processes. Critical assumptions are a good basis for risk management.

### **More focused learning and evaluation**

Critical assumptions for which little knowledge or evidence exists can become the focus for a learning or (action) research to inform the change process. Critical pathways and assumptions help guide analysis and judgements in evaluation.

### **Increased credibility**

An articulated set of assumptions can raise trust among those who have invested in an intervention or other key partners who are not directly involved in the design or intervention.

*Adapted from: Hivos ToC Reflection Notes 3: Working with Assumptions in a Theory of Change Process, Irene Guijt, March 2013.*

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## TYPES OF ASSUMPTIONS

Each step in a ToC process draws on different types of assumptions. Understanding their significance and identifying them are important for the quality of our ToC thinking.

### 1) Assumptions about the context and the actors and factors at play

When we intervene in a system with the intention of changing it, we make many assumptions about the context and what is influencing the situation. We make assumptions about the problem and its causes, about people's needs, capacities, motivation and behaviour, about the roles, interests and relations of key actors. We make assumptions about which strategies would work in that context. We make assumptions about the belief systems, norms and values that shape people's perceptions and responses, and might help or block what we try to achieve.

### 2) Assumptions related to the pathways of change

When we explore and articulate our theories of change, and develop our pathways of change, our assumptions are fully active. They concern the mechanisms at work between our intervention, the change objectives, the effects of specific strategic choices, the cause-effect linkages, and conditions needed for change to occur. These assumptions represent our expectations of what will happen. They are not predictions. These assumptions merit critical questioning.

Assumptions underlying strategic choices in the ToC often relate to the 'solution' we think might work; for example: *'Small scale farmers will be able to supply to regional markets if they have access to credit and market information'*.

These assumptions are also made for project-level strategies; for example: *'Community dialogues will change people's attitudes towards domestic violence (which in turn will change their behaviour)'*. We make many assumptions about the relevance, feasibility, effectiveness and sustainability of the strategies we use.

Developing our pathways of change is based in the causal thinking that shapes our logic of the change process. With each step we make assumptions about cause-effect relations in the pathway or results chain: *'If we do X, then we think that Y will happen. If Y has happened, then Z will be the next step in the change process'*. We may find that the causal link is only likely to be valid when certain conditions are in place. Take the example of *'Free primary education is provided'*, which is expected to lead to *'Girls will come to and stay in school'*. This causal link is clearly conditioned by many factors. If those conditions can be influenced by the intervention, activities to that effect should become part of the strategy and pathways of change. If not, the context should be closely monitored to ensure that the assumed conditions are actually there – or to change plans if they are absent.

### 3) Assumptions related to conditions for and quality of implementation

You may come across two other types of assumptions, which are less critical for ToC thinking. Sometimes assumptions are made about external conditions completely beyond the control of the intervention, such as *'We assume that there is no regime change'* or *'[...] that no natural disaster occurs'*. Such assumptions are not useful for our thinking as they are obvious. Anyone would understand that under extreme circumstances implementation of plans would be disrupted and the objectives would not be achieved.

NB: If regime change is imminent, then of course the intervention should take this fully into account in its strategic thinking.

People also commonly make operational or implementation assumptions. Examples include: 'We assume that participants will turn up for the training' or 'The content of the training is aligned with the participants' needs'. These are clearly important issues to consider but they primarily concern the quality of implementation, and not necessarily the theory of change as such.

Also common is 'We assume we'll have mobilised sufficient funding to implement the programme'. This is so obvious that it is redundant.

### VALIDITY OF ASSUMPTIONS, EVIDENCE AND RISK ANALYSIS

A ToC is based on a series of assumptions, so you need to know if they are valid or not. Core questions to ask: 'Did we check our assumptions? Is there evidence that supports their validity?' Assumptions should be checked with evidence from research, good practices, or the shared professional experience of the actors involved. Assumptions supported by evidence still need monitoring during implementation to ensure that they are also valid in this particular context.

Among the many assumptions underpinning an intervention, there may only be a few that are critical. This means that if these assumptions are not valid, the intervention will probably not work as planned. A risk analysis is useful in terms of knowing which assumptions are most critical to monitor. Categorising the full set of assumptions using the matrix in Figure 2 will help you identify the critical assumptions. Action will need to be taken in the case of those that are more likely to be invalid and have serious consequences. This may involve redesigning aspects of the intervention, close monitoring, integrating them into the research or learning agenda and evaluation.

## ASSUMPTIONS AND RISK ANALYSIS

RISK OF ASSUMPTION BEING INVALID	MILD CONSEQUENCES	SERIOUS CONSEQUENCES
Low likelihood of being invalid <i>(probably will prove to be true)</i>	Don't worry	Can consequences be mitigated?
High likelihood of being invalid <i>(probably will prove not to be true)</i>	Can risk be reduced?	Watch out! High risk - rethink design

Figure 2:  
Risk analysis matrix

### 3.3 THE IMPORTANCE OF VISUALISATION

#### VISUALISATION TO SUPPORT EXPLORATION AND ANALYSIS

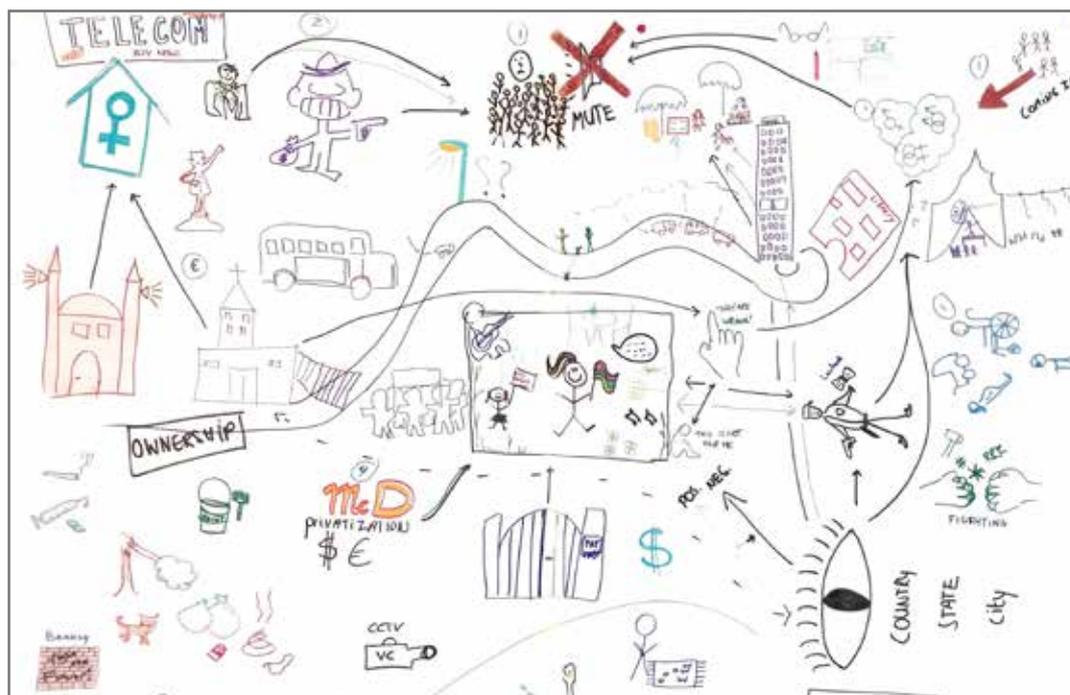
People often find complex issues or situations easier to understand and to remember when supported by meaningful visualisation. Visualisation engages people with a visual learning style, complements dialogue and text and stimulates critical thinking.

Developing a theory of change is like forward storytelling – an expression of participants' hopes, expectations and assumptions. Such a conversation can be awkward in the setting of a formal meeting. Not everyone speaks and individual contributions tend to remain open to multiple interpretation and unconnected to others' experiences. The setting is not conducive for new thinking and emerging insights are easily lost.

Discussing while drawing together engages people in conversation and offers the opportunity to share different perspectives and question each other. Participants can return to certain points at a later stage, and dive deeper in a second round. The drawings stay with the group, to be used for several purposes during the rest of the ToC process.

Drawing while we explore and share our views of the desired change and how the current situation looks, for example in a Rich Picture, helps to bring out our inner thinking and to discover what others think. Assumptions can strike us in ways that might not happen in a discussion. The picture helps communicate with others. It helps to surface and overcome differences in perception and to ensure that we are talking about the same issues. It helps to grasp the complexity of the system and the challenges faced.

Visualisations made during a ToC process do not need to be beautiful. This is not about art but about analysis and learning! It does not matter how they look, as long as everybody involved in the process feels that they understand the visual products and that the picture(s) reflect the group's thinking.



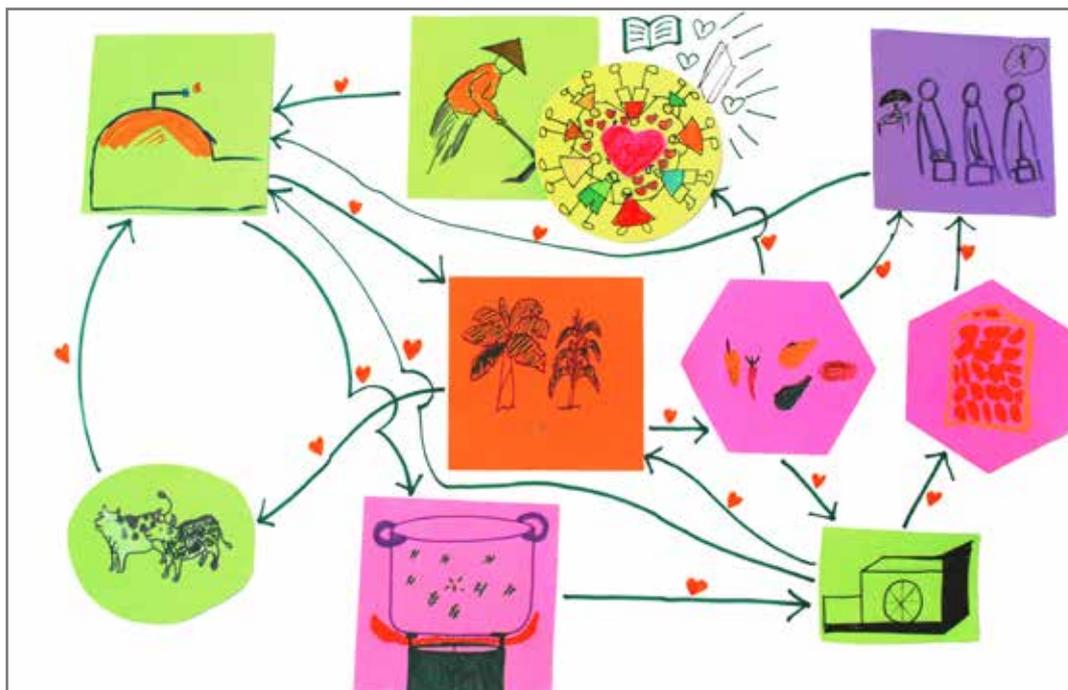
**Image 6:**  
Example  
Rich Picture

## VISUALISING FOR COMMUNICATION

Another important function of visualising is communicating the ToC to people who were not involved in the process of developing it. The pictures and diagrams generated during the ToC process can inform the visualisation of the ToC as a product (see Chapter 6).



**Image 7:**  
Mapping on the ground



**Image 8:**  
Visuals can take any form

# 4 QUALITY OF TOC PRACTICE

## 4.1 PRINCIPLES FOR TOC PRACTICE

A ToC process, undertaken well, can lead to more inclusive, relevant and effective programmes and strategies. For its full value to materialise, the following principles for good practice are key.

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### BOX 6: PRINCIPLES FOR GOOD TOC PRACTICE

Participation in ToC development  
Comprehensive analysis  
Power and gender lenses  
Assumptions articulated  
Regular and active use

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#### PARTICIPATION IN TOC DEVELOPMENT

Participation of a wide range of stakeholders in the development and in the reviews of a ToC results in greater ownership and increases the chances of effective use. A diversity of perspectives improves the quality of the thinking, and consequently of the programme.

Who should be involved, and when? A clear statement of the purpose of the ToC process (see Chapter 5) helps to identify relevant participants. The perspectives from (local) stakeholders are a condition for a grounded ToC that represents the key actors' ambitions, views and knowledge of the context and local dynamics. Assumptions about what needs to change, why and how may differ greatly, both within and between stakeholder groups (including the implementers).

If there is insufficient time in the design phase of a project (e.g. in response to a call for proposals) to include all relevant stakeholders, then provisions need to be made in the proposal to revisit the initial thinking with the stakeholders in the inception phase of the project. Likewise, a ToC may gain in quality if the initial draft is submitted for critical feedback of actors who are not directly involved in the programme, but can contribute to its success, or for review by thematic experts.

#### COMPREHENSIVE ANALYSIS

A sound analysis of context, actors and factors that influence the situation we would like to change is the foundation for a relevant programme or project. This does not mean an open-ended analysis, mapping and researching every factor. The process needs to be guided by the ToC purpose: what really matters, what do we need to understand better, and why? The people for whom we aim to help improve the situation need to be at the centre of the analysis: what is their perspective, what is important to them and what influences their lives?

A ToC process must be informed by stakeholder perspectives and local knowledge, in order to ground the conversation in real and specific circumstances on the ground, and in multiple knowledges. At the same time, we need to make use of relevant knowledge from research and good practice elsewhere, in order not to fall into the trap of 'business as usual', going for familiar activities without questioning their relevance and utility. A good use of available knowledge also strengthens the evidence base of our assumptions.

## POWER AND GENDER ANALYSIS

Inequalities in power and gender relations are strong causes of social injustice. Power and gender analysis are, therefore, central to any ToC process. The ToC (product) should make explicit the nature, sites and distribution of power - including gender relations. It should also document what that means for the strategic choices of the programme, and the assumptions being made with regard to (changing) power and gender relations. See sections 4.2 and 4.3 for more specific guidelines.

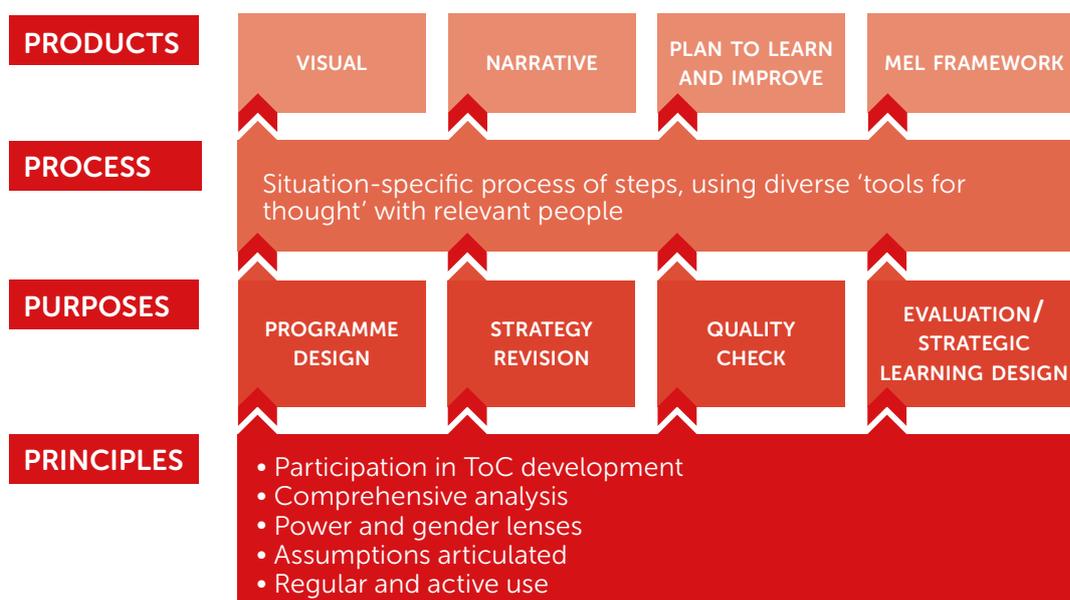
## ARTICULATION OF ASSUMPTIONS

Identifying assumptions underlying people's thinking about change is one of the most valuable aspects of a ToC process (as discussed in section 3.2). Making them explicit allows them to be debated and validated, contributing to mutual understanding and a genuinely strategic discussion. Critical assumptions are important for risk analysis. They need monitoring to test their validity and for the purpose of learning and knowledge generation.

## REGULAR UPDATE OF THE TOC AND ACTIVE USE IN PLANNING, MONITORING, EVALUATION AND LEARNING

To be most effective, ToC use needs to be firmly embedded in the project cycle of the programme and the organisation. The ToC of a project or initiative forms the basis for the planning, monitoring, evaluation and learning framework. Monitoring key assumptions is particularly important for strategic planning and learning. Adaptive planning and management requires regular reviewing and updating of the ToC, so that the programme or initiative can accommodate emerging changes and new insights. A review of the ToC can be triggered by context changes, stakeholder shifts, operational problems, or when there are indications that a key assumption might not be valid. It is especially important to do when processes take unintended turns, to help make sense of events.

Figure 3 illustrates how despite the differences in ToC purpose, process and products, the five principles remain central.



**Figure 3:** Principles, purposes, process, products

## 4.2 POWER AT PLAY

Power plays a central role in Hivos' analysis of the causes of poverty and inequality in the world (see Box 7). Consequently, power analysis is at the core of Hivos' ToC thinking: if we aim to contribute to shifting power relations in a specific situation we need to know how power is distributed, which forms of power and power dynamics are at play, and how the people we aim to benefit are embedded in and affected by them.

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### **BOX 7: CIVIL VOICES ON A GLOBAL STAGE (Hivos 2002)**

"Injustice, poverty, gender inequality as well as the marginalisation and exclusion of large groups of the world population, are basically caused by unequal power relations at all levels of society: from political and economic relations at the international level to personal relations at individual and household levels. These unequal power relations determine – directly or indirectly – which interests are being represented, which voices are being heard and who is in the position to make claims in decision-making processes. The outcome perpetuates unequal access and unequal distribution of material and non-material means and resources, including rights and opportunities. The very people negatively affected by the outcome of these decision-making processes are only rarely participating or represented in them; and if they are, their opinion does not count equally."

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Power analysis helps us to ask the right questions in a ToC process and to rethink deeply rooted assumptions. It provides entry points for change interventions and appropriate strategies. The outcomes will enable us to sharpen our definition of success, and to define our MEL priorities and process accordingly. Power analysis is an effective way to uncover the reasons for gaps between theory and practice, between policy and implementation, between proposed solution and actual outcomes.

At the same time, power analysis can be a challenging process. It may lead to discomfort or even hostility because of the way it brings to light assumptions and realities that normally lie hidden, especially between actor groups. An experienced facilitator can help to overcome these challenges.

Two frameworks for power analysis that have proven to be effective tools of thought are:

- the 'Expressions of Power' by VeneKlasen and Miller, distinguishing between: Power Over, Power With, Power To and Power Within; and
- the 'Power Cube', developed by IDS.

These frameworks can be used separately or in combination. The Power Cube can build on and be used to further explore the concepts of 'power over', 'power to', 'power with', and 'power within' (see Boxes 8 and 9, further explained in section 8.1).

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## BOX 8: EXPRESSIONS OF POWER

### Power Over

The most commonly recognized form of power, power over, has many negative associations for people, such as repression, force, coercion, discrimination, corruption, and abuse. Power is seen as a win-lose kind of relationship.

### Power With

Power with has to do with finding common ground among different interests and building collective strength. Based on mutual support, solidarity and collaboration, power with multiplies individual talents and knowledge. Power with can help build bridges across different interests to transform or reduce social conflict and promote equitable relations.

### Power To

Power to refers to the unique potential of every person to shape his or her life and world. When based on mutual support, it opens up the possibilities of joint action, or power with.

### Power Within

Power within has to do with a person's sense of self-worth and self-knowledge; it includes an ability to recognize individual differences while respecting others. Power within is the capacity to imagine and have hope; it affirms the common human search for dignity and fulfilment.

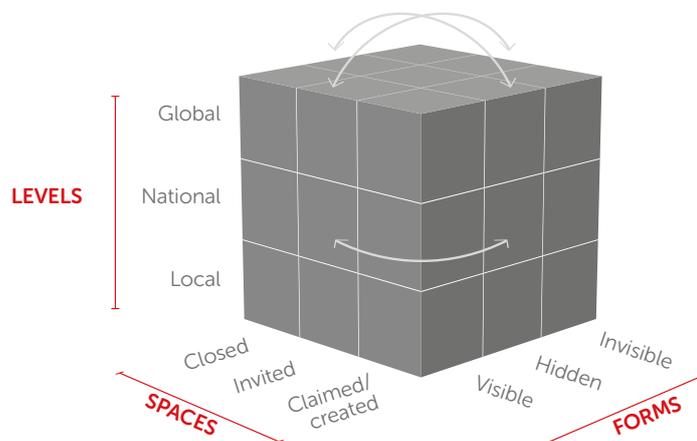
From: 'A new Weave of Power, People & Politics', Lisa VeneKlasen and Valerie Miller 2002

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## BOX 9: THE POWER CUBE

The Power Cube is a framework for analysing the levels, spaces and forms of power, and their inter-relationship. It helps us to explore various aspects of power and how they interact with each other. It lets us visually map ourselves and our situation, including other actors, relationships and forces, and then look at possibilities for movement, mobilisation and change. It helps to find entry points for action.



From: [www.powercube.net](http://www.powercube.net).

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## 4.3 GENDER (IN)EQUALITY

Gender inequality is one of the most universal forms of inequality in the world and manifests itself in unequal power relations between men and women. Hivos promotes the empowerment of women in order to contribute to gender equality at all levels of society, by advancing women's rights, including sexual and reproductive rights. Like power imbalances in general, Hivos sees gender inequality as one of the main causes of poverty and inequality in the world. Structural transformation requires changes in gender relations, so a fully integrated gender analysis is crucial in a ToC process. When discussing power issues and assumptions, gender power issues often remain hidden. They require specific and explicit attention.

We are all gender-biased, men and women alike. We have grown up with notions about our identity as women and men, or feeling that we did not fit these dominant social categories. We all internalised how our social and cultural environment viewed gender roles and what was appropriate for women and men to do, to be and to feel. Even when we have distanced ourselves from those notions, the way we see the world remains influenced by gender stereotypes.

When designing programmes or projects, our personal gender biases and assumptions make us overlook important gender issues. These biases inform and shape the ToC we are developing in terms of content – what matters. But biases also influence the process of how we generate theories of change, the concepts and methods we use. In particular, the identification and prioritisation of assumptions are not gender neutral.

Being mindful of gender dynamics goes well beyond just counting men and women. Throughout the ToC process, we have to take into account gender-differentiated needs, benefits, capacities, risks, influence in decision-making, division of labour, etc. A fully integrated gender analysis in a ToC process means that at all stages of the process, questions about strategic gender interests (see Box 10) are posed. Questions such as:

- Does the desired change benefit women and is it significant for them?
- To which strategic gender interest(s) does it contribute? Why do we think so? (assumptions)
- What gender inequalities are influencing the system?
- What gender dynamics are at play here?

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### BOX 10: STRATEGIC GENDER INTERESTS

Strategic gender interests relate to:

- changes in access to and control over resources;
- institutional changes such as laws, policies and resource allocation;
- changes in socio-cultural norms, beliefs and practices;
- changes in internalised attitudes, values and practices.

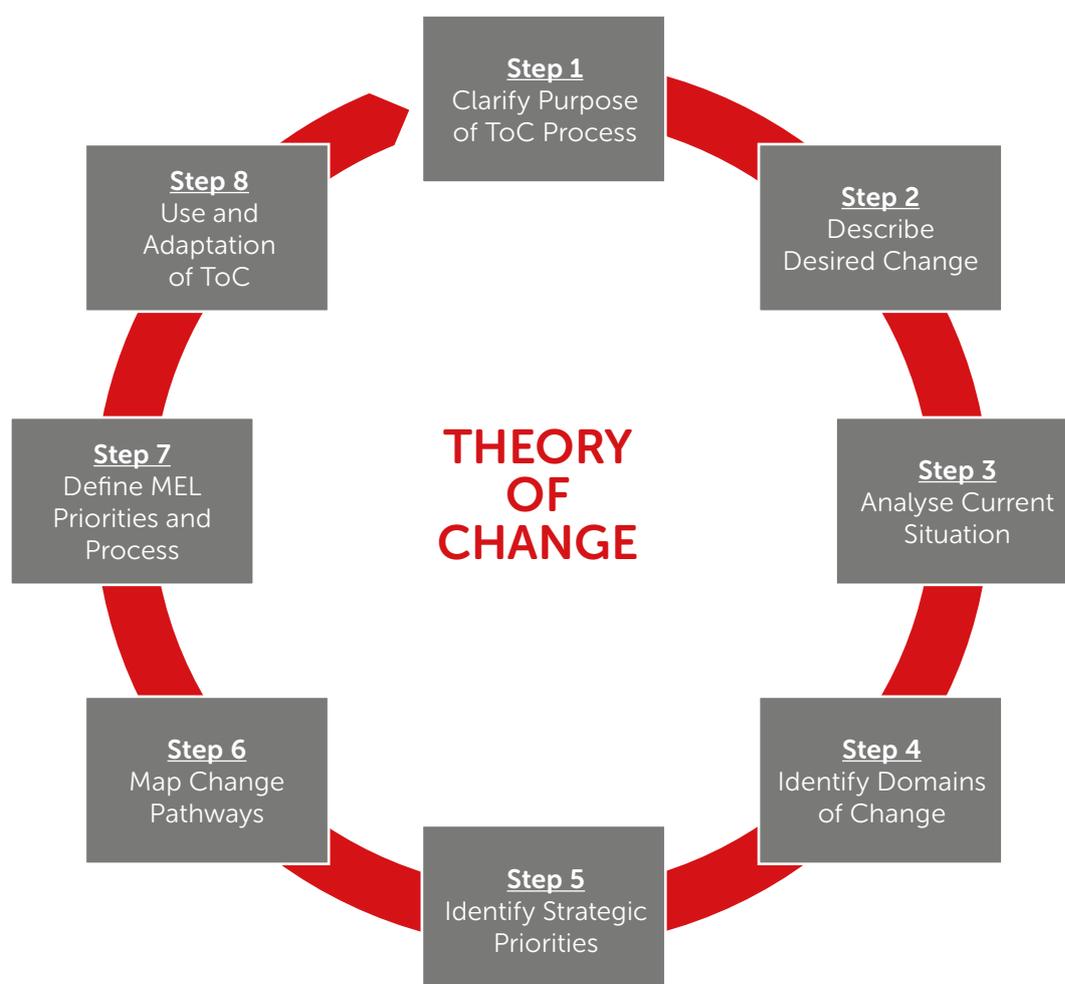
Strategic gender interests require medium to long-term change processes and concern changes at the levels of outcomes and impact.

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**PART B**

**A STEPWISE  
APPROACH**

# 5 DEVELOPING THEORIES OF CHANGE - EIGHT STEPS



**Figure 4:**  
The eight steps

## INTRODUCTION

The eight steps proposed in this chapter are a basic approach to guide you through any ToC process.

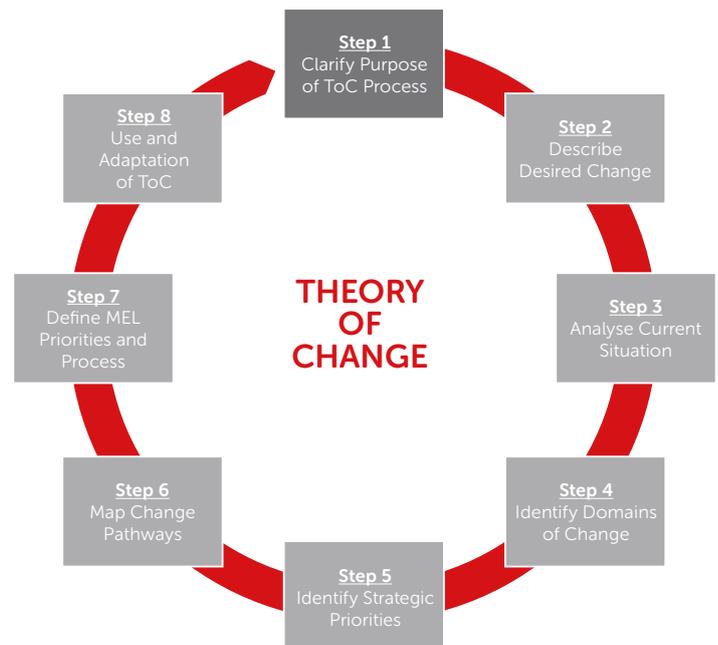
Each step includes an explanation of its essence and role in the ToC process, which will help you decide how to work with that step. Each step also contains a set of core questions to guide you, defines the output that should be produced and challenges you may encounter. Key points to consider are outlined. The tasks involved in each step are detailed, including reference to additional tools for thought that help prompt the critical thinking required in that step. If tools ask for a more elaborate explanation or can be used in different ways, that explanation is given in Chapter 8.

## STEP 1 CLARIFY THE PURPOSE OF THIS TOC PROCESS

### WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?

A clear purpose of going through a ToC process gives you a sense of direction and helps to ensure that the participants start off on the same foot.

The purpose informs decisions about who should participate in the process, how to shape the process, which levels it needs to encompass, what type of outputs or products you want to end up with and which questions need specific attention in each step.



### ESSENCE

Determining a clear and shared purpose for this ToC process, in order to:

- know why you engage in the process and what you expect as a result;
- enable decision-making about the process.

### CORE QUESTIONS

1. Why are we doing this? What do we want to be different for the team and our partners or allies as a result? Which specific benefits do we expect the process will bring us?
2. What is this ToC process expected to produce? What does that mean for the levels to address and the design of the process?

### OUTPUT

A clear, documented statement of the purpose and level of the ToC process and product, including who needs to be involved in the process and why.

### CHALLENGES

New insights gained from a ToC process are likely to challenge your thinking, practice and resource allocation.

## KEY POINTS TO CONSIDER

1. There are two types of purposes for going through a ToC process that need consideration:

### a) Why are we doing this?

Thinking about why you are doing a ToC process and what will be different as the result, obliges you to be open to questioning your current practice. Are we doing 'the right thing'? Is there a better mix of strategies than our usual repertoire, do we need to rethink resource allocation? Or, what is problematic that the ToC process might solve? Are there conflicting

perspectives in the team or partnership? Are we lacking evidence of what has and has not worked? Do changes in the context require a rethink of focus and feasibility?

**b) What is the intended product of this ToC process?**

ToC thinking can be used for different purposes, as is explained in section 2.5 and summarised in Table 3. A ToC process to design a project is different from a strategy revision, or using ToC to develop a learning or research agenda.

These questions will need to be answered partly in preparing the ToC process with the larger group of stakeholders. However, both core questions need full attention at the start of the actual ToC development process with the wider group of participants. Clarity and understanding of the purpose of the process is necessary for aligning expectations and is conditional for full and successful participation.

<b>TABLE 3: PURPOSES OF TOC USE</b>	
<b>Programme or project design</b>	Comprehensive situation analysis (context, stakeholders, power, gender, etc.), stakeholder involvement, strategic choices, critical assumptions, MEL framework
<b>Strategy revision</b>	Regular revisit of ToC to review strategies in response to changes inside and outside the project, new insights, and evidence
<b>Quality review of existing programme</b>	Improve programme quality, make implicit assumptions explicit, sharpen strategies
<b>Strategic learning design</b>	Define learning questions, building evidence base, what works or not and under which conditions
<b>Evaluation</b>	Mid-term, end-term, validate assumptions, reconstruction of ToC
<b>Collaboration and collective MEL framework &amp; process in a multi-actor initiative</b>	Develop joint strategic approach and collective MEL framework and learning agenda, with clear and agreed roles and responsibilities of each actor involved
<b>Scaling up or out</b>	Analysis of suitability and feasibility of scaling an initiative up and/or out in other locations, need for adaptation of the ToC, identify assumptions to be tested in the new context

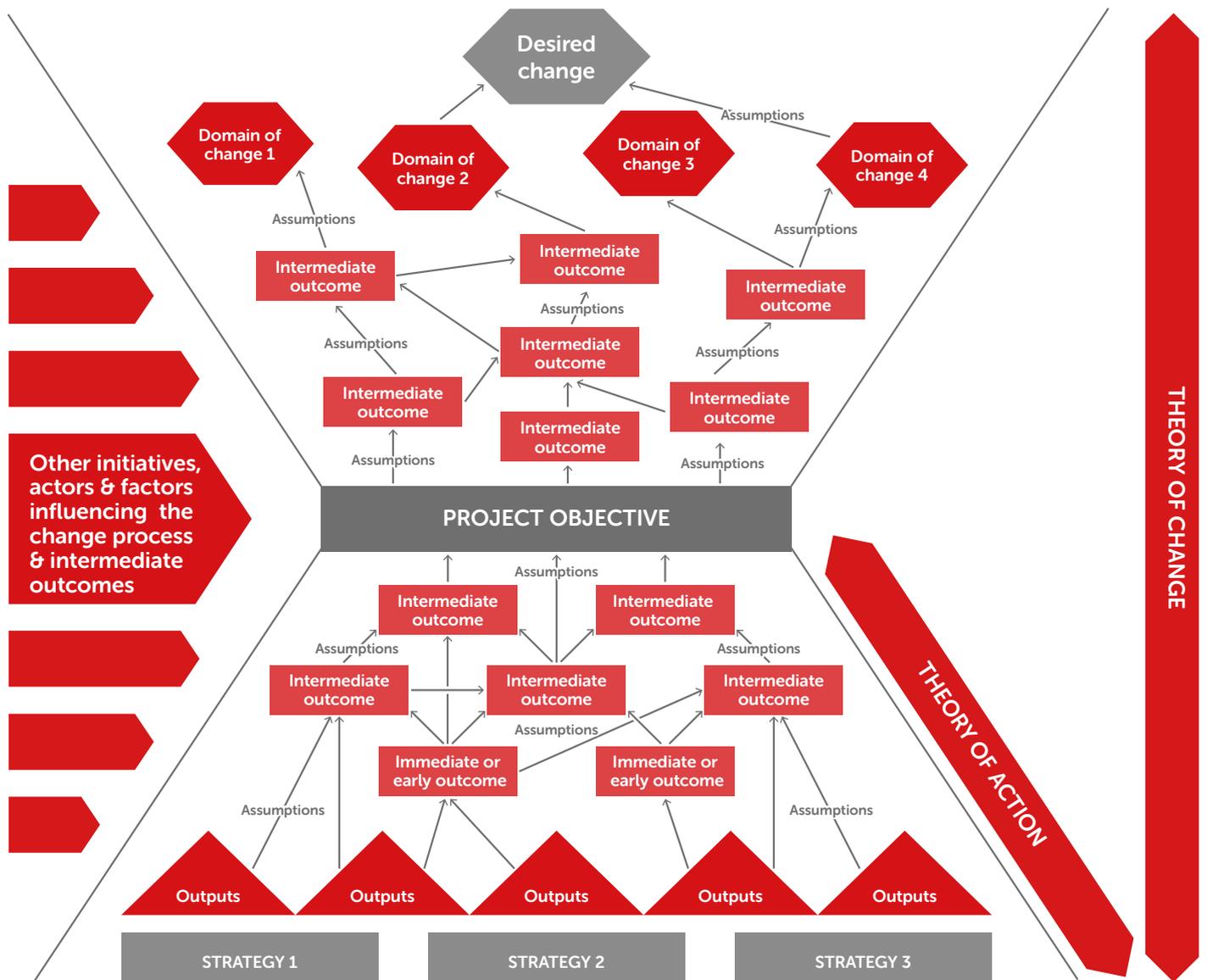
**NB** Experience learns that for most purposes of a ToC process a single workshop is not sufficient for developing all the Steps fully.

- Part of clarifying the purpose of your ToC process concerns determining the level(s) of ToC thinking it needs to encompass. The appropriate level(s) directly relates to the ToC purpose and intended ToC product. It has consequences for the route you will take through the stepwise process and the aspects you need to emphasise.

The appropriate level of ToC thinking needs to be considered upfront because it is the most common stumbling block to a productive ToC process, especially in Step 6: Map Change Pathways. Without a clear focus, the mapping risks being too detailed at the higher level and becoming overwhelming, or lacking necessary detail at the project level. How to avoid this is explained below and in more detail in Step 6.

- The 'hourglass' diagram (Figure 5) depicts how your ToC and change pathways can focus on:
- developing a ToC at a high level of change (the level of Domains of Change - Step 4), encompassing the upper half of the hourglass;
  - developing a ToC at project level (Theory of Action), encompassing the lower half of the hourglass;
  - develop a full ToC, spanning both halves of the hourglass.

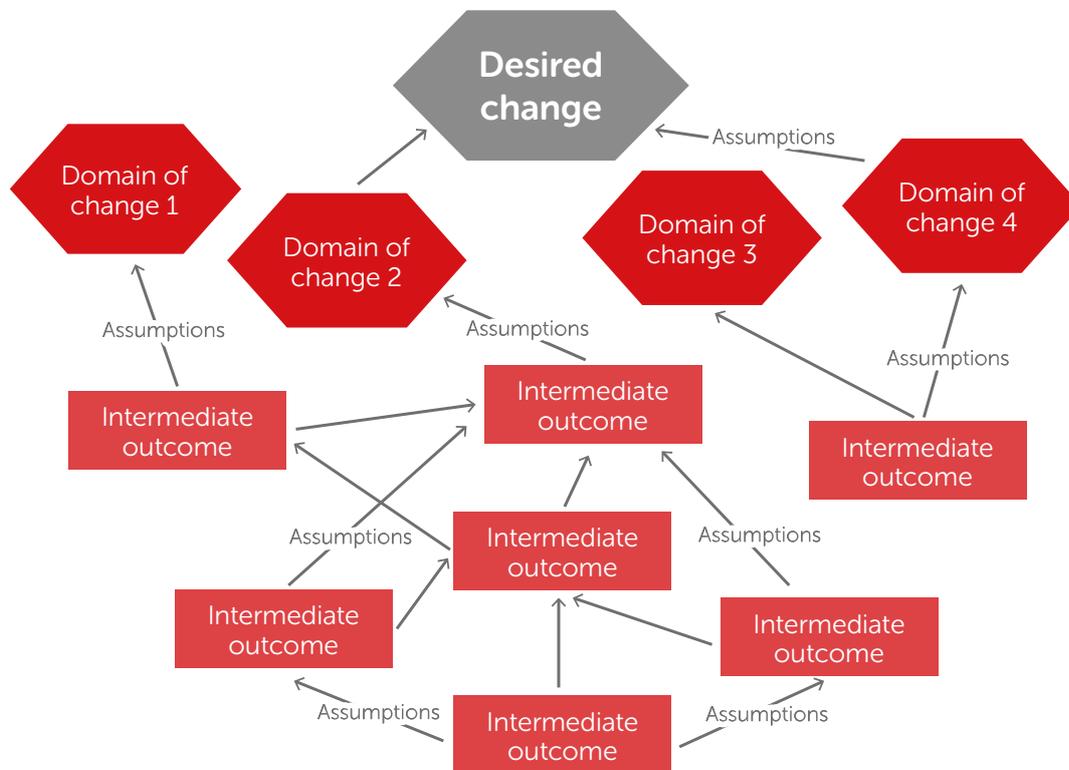
**Figure 5:**  
The hourglass:  
change pathways  
at different levels



**a. Developing your ToC for the upper half of the hourglass**

This is relevant if the ToC process focuses on a (thematic) policy or strategic level. You explore and articulate the thinking of Hivos, the team or partnership about how change happens in a specific, but still broad area of change, for example Transparency & Accountability of governments, and how Hivos sees its role in this area.

- The focus and result of the mapping is on developing a 'change' or 'system map' rather than detailed pathways. This level of ToC thinking focuses on change processes with a long term horizon and is not yet context-specific, so going into too much detail is not productive. Assumptions about causal relations are based on evidence from research and Hivos' experience in the specific area of change.
- You do not go down to the project level: many projects in different contexts can be designed based on and drawing from this higher level ToC.

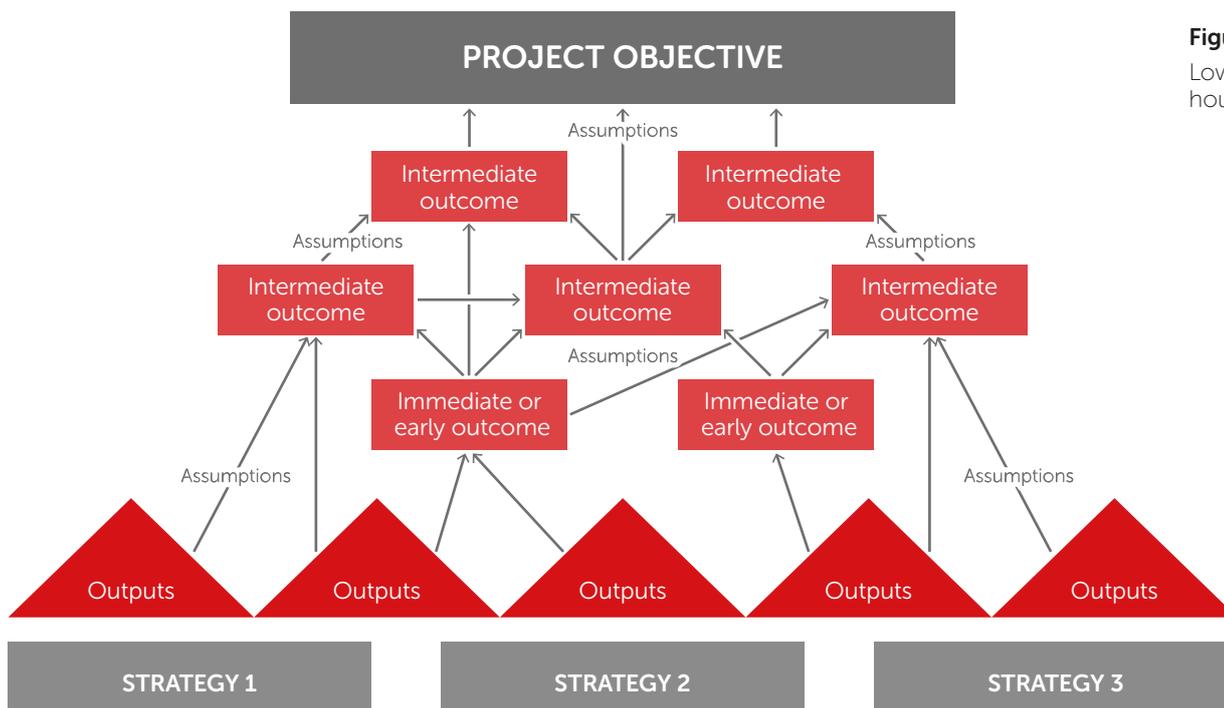


**Figure 6:**  
Upper half hourglass

**b. Developing a project level ToC, or Theory of Action (the lower half of the hourglass)**

You can start directly at the project level only when designing a project for which Hivos has already articulated a higher level ToC that can support and frame the process. However, you still need to go through Steps 1 (Purpose) and 3 (Current situation), to make the existing ToC thinking context-specific. You also need to think through – and be able to explain – how in this case the lower half of the hourglass (this specific project) links to the upper half: how does the project contribute to the envisaged larger, longer-term change process, and what is Hivos' role in it?

- At the project level, the pathways of change need to be fully elaborated and the logic needs to be clear. Assumptions about cause-effect relations are clearly articulated and underpinned by evidence or other relevant information.



**Figure 7:**  
Lower half  
hourglass

### c. Developing a full ToC (encompassing both halves of the hourglass)

This is required and recommended in cases where no specific higher level ToC thinking is available and you need to develop the full ToC including the project level. For example, when you respond to a Call for Proposals in which only a high level goal, issue or domain of change is determined by the donor. The applicant is required to develop a specific project proposal and explain how that project will contribute to the achievement of the higher goal.

In such cases you have to articulate the full pathways of the ToC at both levels, but:

- in the upper half of the hourglass you do not elaborate the pathways in great detail. The focus is on clarifying your overall thinking about the change process and identifying key assumptions: the reader needs to understand the logic and quality of your overall ToC thinking;
- in the lower half of the hourglass you need to provide much more detail regarding the pathways of change: to sharpen your own strategic thinking and the design of the project, as well as to convince the reader that you are capable of implementing this project successfully.

**NB** There may be a fourth option: a donor provides its own overall ToC and asks Hivos to design a project. Or, a project level ToC is provided and Hivos is interested in implementing it, e.g. in a tender. It is crucial that we still go through our own ToC thinking process for each case, in order to know if Hivos' thinking is aligned with that of the donor, or not. If the difference between the two is substantial, we should seriously consider not applying for the project. Poor alignment between Hivos and the donor is likely to lead to problems in implementation. If the gaps are not fundamental, we should use our ToC thinking to comment on the donor's ToC, propose adaptation, and explain why we think that is the better option. In doing so, we may not only preclude problems in the implementation phase, but we also demonstrate our expertise and quality of thinking.

## TOOLS FOR THOUGHT

- The two core questions
- Table 3 Purposes of ToC use
- The hourglass figure

## TASKS

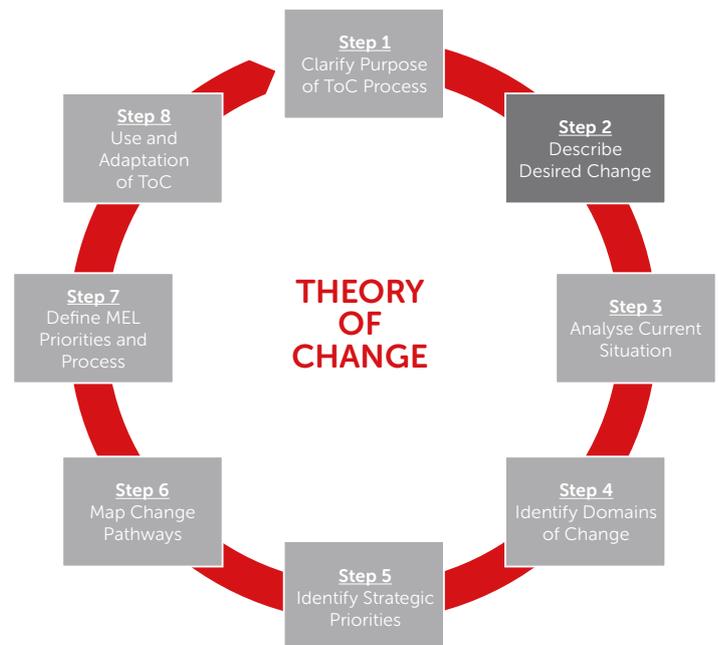
1. Discuss the first core question with the key stakeholders: Why are we doing this? What do we expect it will bring us? Be as specific as possible.  
When you do this with a group of participants you can use facilitation methods that help making expectations and different perspectives explicit. Critical reflections from evaluations or reviews of other Hivos programmes relevant for this process can be used to trigger discussion.
2. Document the outcomes of your conversation and discuss what they mean in relation to:
  - Who should be involved in the process?
  - Which aspects or components of the ToC process need prioritising?
  - How to design and plan the process; for example, how much emphasis and time to give to different steps?
3. Discuss the second core question: what is the purpose of ToC thinking in this case and what is the expected product? Use Table 3 for help and specify further for your specific project/programme.
4. Discuss what the purpose and expected product mean for the level(s) of ToC thinking. Discuss the hourglass diagram and decide which levels to encompass in the process. Document the outcomes of your conversation and the reasons for choices made.
5. Identify assumptions: Which assumptions are we making about the purpose of this ToC process? Do we need to check them? If so, how?
6. Update and complete documentation of the outputs of Step 1, in terms of:
  - What is the purpose of the ToC process?
  - Who should be involved and why?
  - Which aspects or components of the ToC process need prioritising?

## STEP 2 DESCRIBE THE DESIRED CHANGE

### WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?

What you want to change, why and for whom is the core question of any ToC process.

The desired change represents the changes in people's lives and the conditions and relationships in society that we wish to see occurring in the years to come and to contribute to by our actions.



### ESSENCE

- Define a long-term change that is challenging and hard, stretching but just about reachable in 10 - 20 years' time.
- 'Head in the clouds, feet on the ground'.

### CORE QUESTION

- What is the desired change, why and for whom?

### OUTPUT

- Careful consideration of the people you want to benefit in a positive future situation.
- A statement of desired change, with assumptions, that is tangible, specific, and plausible.

### CHALLENGES

- To define a people-oriented statement of change, not an abstract concept.
- The desired change must be ambitious, but not impossible to achieve.
- To identify assumptions.



## KEY POINTS TO CONSIDER

1. How the desired change is chosen, formulated and viewed is conditioned by the identity, positioning, mind-sets, and interests of the people formulating the theory of change. Reflect on who is involved in the articulation of the desired change:
  - Who is defining the desired change, or dream? Who is initiating this process of analysis, and which other actors are involved?
  - Are the people supposed to benefit from the initiative/programme involved in its design?
    - If not, when and how will they be involved or consulted?
    - How do they perceive and value what is articulated as the desired change?
    - If they are not involved: How do we know? If we do not know: when and how will we ensure we know?

2. There are two ways to start exploring the options for achieving change in a situation where that is deemed necessary or desirable:
  - a. by defining and analysing the problem.
  - b. by articulating the desired change.

Hivos chooses to use the latter, because a 'desired change' approach:

- takes a 'positive' starting point, which is motivating stakeholders;
- is more future-oriented;
- is more conducive to people using their imagination and creativity;
- gives direction more naturally to the strategic thinking and a delineation of the area of intervention, by its focus on the possible role(s) of the actors involved in the ToC process in achieving the change.

**NB** This choice does not mean that problem analysis is not important. In the next step (Analyse current situation) problem analysis is part of the process.

---

### **BOX 11: BOTH STARTING POINTS CARRY SPECIFIC RISKS**

Risks of a problem approach:

- 'negative' starting point;
- tendency to focus too quickly on solutions;
- discouragement or loss of direction (e.g. by doing a problem tree analysis): so many causes and factors, where to start;
- tendency to address all factors playing a role in the problem, leading to fragmentation of efforts and resources.

Risks of a desired change approach:

- a limited analysis by focusing only on what the main actor(s) involved are able to 'offer';
  - to start with unrealistic, too ambitious dreams.
- 

### **TOOLS FOR THOUGHT (see section 8.1)**

- Rich Picture
- Four Dimensions of Change
- Celebrating Success: the Time Machine/Helicopter, the Party, or the Conference

### **TASKS**

1. Concentrate on changes in and among individuals, organisations, social structures, cultural patterns, and institutions, to which Hivos wants to contribute, in a time perspective of 10 to 20 years. The desired change must be plausible: there must be a sufficient degree of probability that the change can happen.
2. Visualise and draw the desired change or 'dream'.

Visualising helps the group to bring to the surface and share individual thoughts, to start the conversation, to stretch thinking, and to merge the ideas of different team members into a shared view. The drawing itself is helpful to zoom in (and out) on specific parts of the full picture and explore them further. See also section 3.3: The importance of visualisation.

Picture the desired change as concretely as possible:

- Who are the people the desired change should benefit: for whom will the situation have changed positively, and in what way?

Be specific (gender, age, ethnicity, etc.):

- Will the change work out differently for different categories of people? In what way? Why?
- How do women benefit from this change and is it significant for them?

- What will have changed?

Think of: attitudes, capabilities, behaviour, relationships, institutions, policies, norms, values, etc. (e.g. using the Four Dimensions of Change)

3. Describe the desired change as a change statement, specifying changes for specific groups of people, women and men.

#### **Example of a change statement**

Girls and young women in Malawi are better able to make their own choices in life, because the Malawi government prevents abuses and protects the rights of the girl child through the implementation of an appropriate legal framework; and because sexual and reproductive health service provision is responsive to the needs of young people, in particular girls and young women.

4. Discuss and document assumptions related to the desired change.

## **ASSUMPTIONS**

Guiding questions:

- Why is this change desirable?  
We think this change is desirable and of value for the women and men we want it to benefit, because [...].
- Why does this change matter to us (worldview, values, etc.)?  
This change matters to us because [...].
- Which ideas and convictions about change underlie our picture of the desired change?  
We believe that (this type of) change happens through [...].
- What social beliefs in the context (where the desired change should occur) does this change, build on or challenge?  
This change builds on or challenges the following common beliefs [...].

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### **BOX 12: QUESTIONS FOR DIVING DEEPER INTO ASSUMPTIONS ABOUT THE PEOPLE AFFECTED**

What do we assume about:

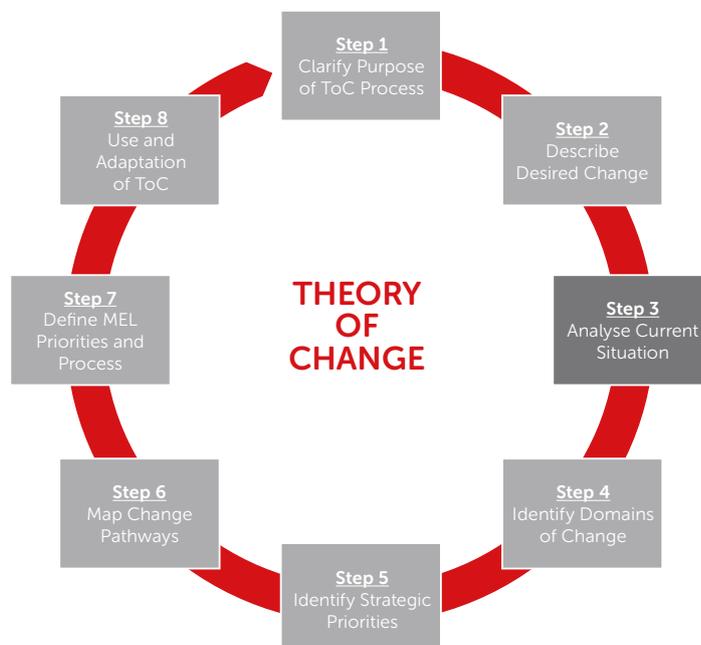
- who the affected people, women and men, are?
  - how homogenous or diverse this group is?
  - what their perspectives and interests in the issue are? Are these the same, or different?
  - what the affected people need? Or: what the situation/society needs?
  - how the affected people deal with or respond to the issue/problem?
  - what the affected people value?
-

## STEP 3 ANALYSE THE CURRENT SITUATION

### WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?

Every change initiative takes place in a context that determines the conditions and the opportunities for change. We need to understand the situation to be able to make strategic choices that increase the chances of success.

This step is about analysis of the current situation and the issues we wish to change: the 'ecosystem' in which the desired change is supposed to take place: which social, political, economic, cultural, ecological and geographical factors directly influence the issue, its causes or effects, and the desired change process? What are the roles and interests of stakeholders and other actors? Where are power and gender dynamics at play? What are drivers of change and opportunities?



### ESSENCE

Generate a broad – and shared – understanding of the system in which the desired change is needed.

### CORE QUESTION

What is the current situation in relation to the issue(s) we wish to change?

### OUTPUT

- A rich picture about the issues and situation for which the change is desired.
- Key stakeholders & their stakes (interest in and influence over).
- Institutions, structures, processes, interrelationships, issues, conflicts, resources, blockages, opportunities, etc.
- Knowledge gaps identified.

### CHALLENGES

- To analyse with sufficient depth without losing focus on what really matters.
- To consistently include power and gender analysis.

## KEY POINTS TO CONSIDER

1. This step is often called 'context analysis'. At Hivos, we understand that issues and situations are affected by the interplay of local, national, regional and international dynamics, so we tend to think about 'systems'. Lasting change requires system change. This means engaging with a multitude of influencing factors, interacting, pushing and pulling in different directions. System change is always contested: there are many actors with stakes in both the status quo as well as in changing it, and who have different interests and perspectives. Their positions and relationships are characterised and conditioned by power and gender inequalities (see also 3.1).

2. This step is about understanding how people experience issues in a holistic way – a health issue may have knock-on effects on income and education, etc. A good place to start is by placing the people most affected, or who you want most to benefit, at the centre of the situation analysis.
3. It can be difficult to set boundaries for a system or situation analysis: you and other participants may be tempted to throw the net too wide or to go on for too long. How deep the analysis needs to be depends on your purpose, so ask yourself what you want to get out of it, what questions you want answered. To make your situation analysis purposeful and focused, you can ask: 'Is everyone happy with this as a general description or are there critical gaps?' If necessary, you can limit the time to be spent on it. Important factors not surfaced in this step may come up in next steps and can be added then.
4. In this step, the Rich Picture is proposed as the main tool for exploring the overall situation. Depending on the issue at hand, you may need to do an analysis of a specific aspect of the issue at hand in the 'dive deeper' phase, using another analytical tool. For example, a specific gender framework, a Power Cube exercise, or a tool mapping influence and interest. Make sure you include the outcomes of such an exercise in the Rich Picture, and also keep it as a separate output, to use in later stages of strategic thinking.

## **TOOLS FOR THOUGHT (see section 8.1)**

- Rich Picture
- Stakeholder and actor analysis, Influence matrices
- Power analysis: Power Cube, Expressions of Power (see also section 4.2)
- Gender analysis (see also section 4.3)
- Framings

## **TASKS**

1. Draw a Rich Picture of the current situation. As a (sub)group you draw one picture together, which can have many different elements. Do not discuss, but explain to each other what you are drawing and why. Think of including:
  - stakeholders & their stakes: who are they, how are they affected by the issue? How do they influence it? What is their interest?
  - causes and effects of the issue/situation you want to change
  - relevant context factors.Draw linkages where relevant.
2. After a first round, take a step back and discuss what is there, how you understand it and what is missing. Take a second round.
3. Dive deeper by analysing:
  - Power relations between the actors and factors on the drawing – who has power over, power to, power with, power within. Use the Power analysis frameworks in section 4.2. Which forms of power and power dynamics are influencing the situation? (in society, social life, organisations, family, etc.). Where and how do power inequalities play out in the issue at hand?

- Gender dynamics: make gender specific factors in the context and stakeholder/actor analysis explicit. What gender inequalities are influencing the system? (See Box 13: Gender analysis).
- Perspectives of key actors, using different framings.

Include the outcomes in your drawing.

---

### BOX 13: GENDER ANALYSIS

How is the current situation in terms of:

- The status of women and their ability to exercise their human rights;
- The gender division of labour and workload of women;
- Access to and control over resources of women as compared to men (including mobility);
- Influence of women in decision-making at household, community and society levels (as compared to men);
- Self-determination of women over their body, reproduction and sexuality;
- Social beliefs and norms about gender roles: what women and men should and should not do and be; images of women in society;
- Violence against women;
- Organisational capacity of women and representation of women's interests.

**NB** When we speak of 'women' and 'men': who do we mean? Which women, which men?

---

- If not already there, you can refine your drawing and analysis further by adding:
  - Interrelationships, conflicts, agreements, resources (e.g. people, money, assets, skills);
  - Nature of interrelationships (e.g. strong/weak, conflicted/collaborative, direct/indirect);
  - Non-material aspects affecting how stakeholders, stakes, structures and processes interact: aspirations, goals, motivations, values and norms;
  - How factors manifest themselves at the local, subnational, national, regional and/or international level. To what extent are these factors being influenced by developments at those levels?
- Discuss and write down assumptions made. Give examples.

### ASSUMPTIONS

Discuss and document:

- Why have we assessed the current situation as we did? What beliefs, values and perspectives are shaping our analysis?
- Why are these the stakeholders and actors that matter?

We have included these stakeholders because [...]

- Why do we judge specific influences as helping or hindering, particularly power and gender dynamics?

We have identified factors as helping or hindering because [...]

- Are our assumptions shared, or do we have different perspectives?

We differ in the following observations and assumptions because [...]

- Do we have evidence that our assumptions are true?

Evidence:

- On the basis of what evidence, knowledge, experiences or impressions do we make our assumptions?
- What data and research are available about the situation and the issue at hand? To what extent do these confirm or question our assumptions?
- Which (additional) data and research are needed for us to feel comfortable about the core of our situation description?

### **LOOK BACK, REVIEW AND FINE-TUNE**

What do the outcomes of this step mean for the initial outcome of the previous step?  
Do we need to make any adjustments? Why?

> Review and fine-tune

See next page for [Questions for diving deeper into Context and Stakeholder analysis](#).

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## **BOX 14: QUESTIONS FOR DIVING DEEPER INTO CONTEXT AND STAKEHOLDER ANALYSIS**

NB Not all these questions need to be answered. Choose what is relevant for your purpose, or what has not yet been discussed.

### **Stakeholders & other actors of influence**

- Who are the key stakeholders that affect or are affected by the change process?
- How do these stakeholders relate to each other?
- Which other actors play an important role in the issue/ change process? Is their role helping or hindering?
- What is the political and governance landscape like: who can influence the desired changes? Who owns the decisions that really have an impact on the context?
- How do actors perceive the people most affected by the situation?
- What are the interests and positions of the stakeholders in the issue? Where do their interests conflict or align?
- What is the motivation, capacity and opportunity of actors to change? What are their incentives, constraints, drivers, agendas? What might motivate them to do what is necessary to achieve the envisaged change?
- If relevant: what drives actors who actively cause, reproduce or maintain the problem? (Interest, habit, lack of knowledge, power, greed, etc.)

### **Context**

- Which political, social, historical and economic conditions affect or are affected by the change process?
- Which societal structures (formal and non-formal institutions, legal frameworks, cultural practices, etc.) play a role and how do they affect the process?
- What are (historical) areas of conflict and the causes of conflict?
- What gender specific factors, actors, values and dynamics are at play? See also box on gender analysis.
- Which geographical or environmental factors are of importance?

### **Opportunities for change**

- Is there recognition of the need for change? By whom?
  - Are there different perspectives or alternatives for the dominant view in society? By whom are these held or promoted?
  - What or who are drivers of change in the system? Where are opportunities for change?
  - What gender-differentiated or gender-related opportunities are present?
-

## STEP 4 IDENTIFY DOMAINS OF CHANGE

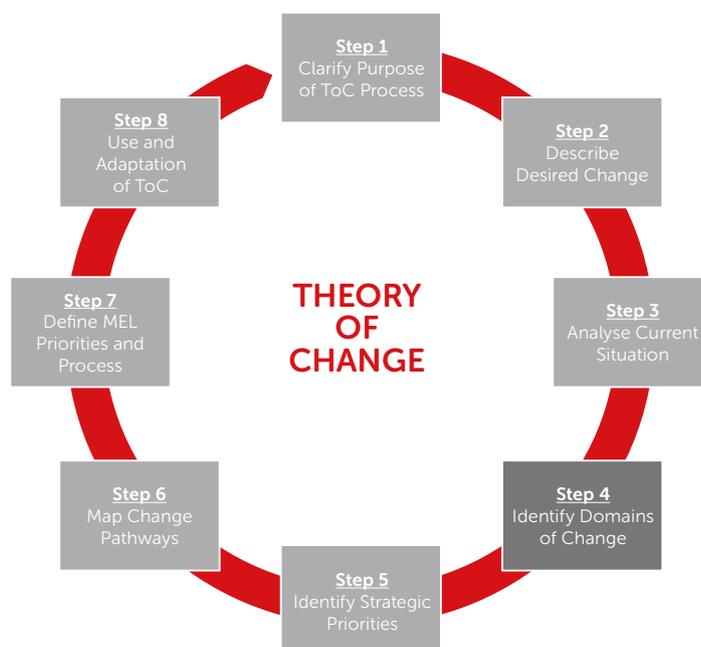
### WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?

Now the current situation has been explored and mapped, we need to identify the domains where important changes have to take place in order to achieve the overall desired change.

Identifying the domains of change helps to make the complexity more manageable, and to determine what matters for the desired change, and for the people who we hope will benefit from that change. It enables us to decide where best to intervene.

To make the **desired change** possible, changes usually need to happen simultaneously in many different domains and amongst different groups of stakeholders.

For example, changes may be needed in formal institutions and the behaviours and relationships of actors involved in those, like the legal system; changes in the behaviour and relationships that shape people's participation in political processes; changes in the norms and values people have about sexuality; changes in the attitudes of service providers, etc. These changes are substantial, beyond the control of any single actor, and often need to happen in parallel in order to reach the desired change.



### ESSENCE

Based on the analysis of the current situation, identify broad areas or domains where change is needed in order to achieve the desired change.

### CORE QUESTION

Who and what needs to change, where and in which way, for the desired change to become possible? Who needs to do what differently?

### OUTPUT

A set of three to five 'domains of change', which articulate the improved behaviour of specific actors or stakeholders, and the improved conditions in people's lives or society that are essential for the achievement of the desired change.

### CHALLENGES

In discussing this high level of changes it is easy to get lost in the complexity. It is not possible to identify everything that needs to change, so you need to be selective and choose three to five.

## KEY POINTS TO CONSIDER

1. Some ToC users call the changes at this level 'preconditions'. Others call them 'high-level results areas'. In this guide, we use 'domains of change'. It concerns areas of change that are broad and long term, and we cannot work on all of them.
2. The domains of change need to be formulated as much as possible in terms of changed behaviour of specific stakeholders/actors, or as changed conditions in people's lives, their communities or society at large.
3. These are high-level domains of change, they need to be tangible and realistic, but it is not possible to identify everything that needs to change. So you need to be selective and choose three to five. If the group has identified more domains of change, they have to decide on the most important ones. Try not to spend more than 1.5 hours discussing this; it is better to come back to the domains to review them as you progress through the ToC process.

## TOOLS FOR THOUGHT (see section 8.1)

- Four Dimensions of Change
- Power lens
- Gender lens
- Framings

## TASKS

1. Use the Rich picture to trigger the initial naming of domains. Zoom in on and name those parts of the current situation that need changing. Identify clusters that you agree are a coherent domain of change.
  - Draw boundaries in your Rich Picture, capturing the domains.
  - Identify where there may be gaps in your picture – are there key areas of change missing?
  - Now stand back and think beyond your collective picture, asking: Are there other domains of change that are needed for the desired change to become possible?
  - Develop a label to describe the domain; for example 'changes in the behaviour and relationships that shape people's participation in political processes'; 'changes in the coalitions and relationships between national and international actors'; or 'changes in the governance of the health system'.

**NB** If you end up with more than three to five domains decide on the most critical ones and continue the process with those.

2. Within each domain, identify who needs to change and in what way.
  - List the key stakeholders/actors per domain. You can do so by putting the domain in the middle of a flip chart and put the actors around it, and then:
  - Formulate the way in which you would like to them to act, think, relate – and why.What needs to change in: relationships, capabilities, values, attitudes, behaviours, formal and informal institutions (policies, legal frameworks, customs, cultural patterns, beliefs, consensual norms, etc.) that support the desired change?
  - What needs to change in power and gender relations and dynamics?
3. Discuss and write down the assumptions made.

## ASSUMPTIONS

- Why do we think that it is these stakeholders, actors, groups, entities who need to change?
- What are we assuming about their current and desired needs, capacities, behaviours, relationships, receptivity and motivation to change? (See section 8.1 for resources about behaviour change).

We assume the following about their:

- needs
  - current capacities
  - current behaviours
  - relationships
  - motivation to change
  - opportunity to change
- Evidence: on the basis of what evidence, knowledge, experiences or impressions do we make our assumptions?
  - What other perspectives are possible, and would possibly challenge our assumptions? Why?

## LOOK BACK, REVIEW AND FINE-TUNE

What do the outcomes of this step mean for the initial outcome of the previous step? Do we need to make any adjustments? Why?

> Review and fine-tune

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### BOX 15: QUESTIONS FOR DIVING DEEPER

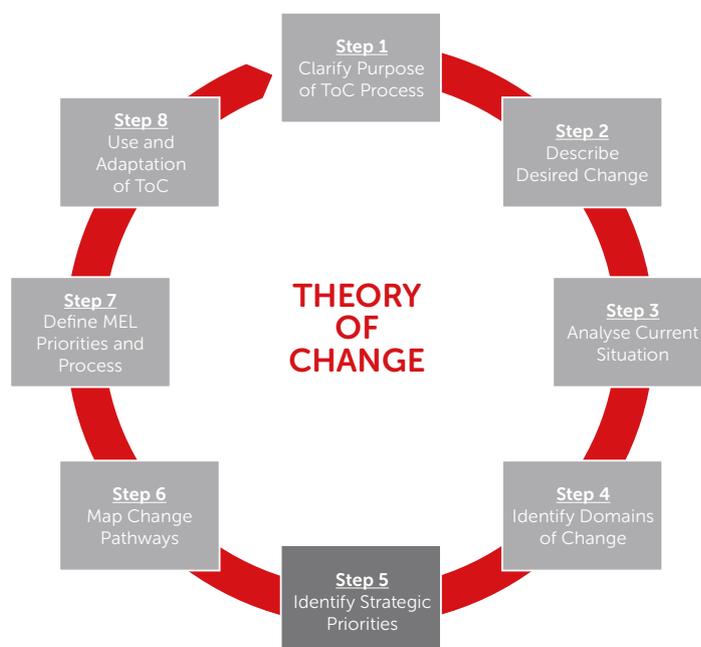
- Do existing relationships between actors need to change, or perhaps entirely new relationships need to be facilitated between actors who would not normally associate with each other?
  - Who is currently excluded from key processes in this domain and should be included? Why?
  - Do forms of access and participation need to change?
  - Are there new patterns of collective action that need to be promoted, do these need to be formally or informally constituted?
  - What specific aspects of existing formal institutions need to change?
-

## STEP 5 IDENTIFY STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

### WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?

This step is about boundary setting and focus. We have identified the main domains of change, now we need to make a strategic analysis of where and how to intervene within those domains, with the best chances of success.

The main issue is to define priority change areas where Hivos, with partners and allies, can strategically influence and can realistically make a difference.



### ESSENCE

Exploring and deciding on strategic priorities within the domains of change towards the desired change.

### CORE QUESTION

Within the domain, what changes can Hivos best influence, why and how, in the next 3-5 years?

### OUTPUT

Prioritised selection of (intermediate) changes to influence, with a robust justification and assumptions.

### CHALLENGES

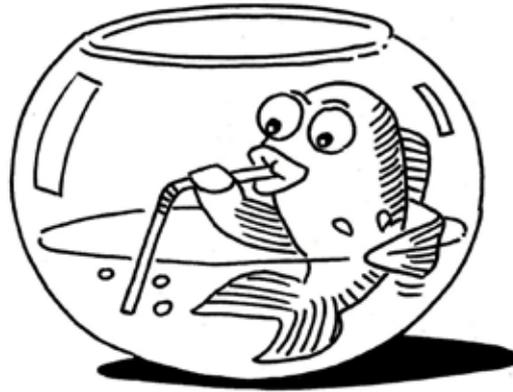
This step is about identifying priority areas, actors or stakeholders that are strategically feasible for you to influence. It is not yet about **how** you will influence these changes.

### KEY POINTS TO CONSIDER

1. The analysis is based on a mid-term timeframe (3-5 years): not because this analysis is for a specific project period, but because in most cases the situation and context will change substantially in this time span. When used well, the ToC will be updated and adapted several times during the process.
2. Each domain of change is made up of networks of actors, institutions, inter-relationships and processes. For example, the domain *'changes in the behaviour and relationships that shape people's participation in political processes'* involves citizens, their organisations, political parties, the electoral registry and many others. In this step, you need to *zoom in* on which of these changed behaviours and relationships you will aim to influence for the next 3-5 years, in order to promote positive changes in people's political participation.

## TOOLS FOR THOUGHT (see section 8.1)

- Criteria and questions for prioritisation (see Box 16)
- Ritual dissent



THINK BEFORE  
YOU ACT!

## TASKS

1. Apply the selection criteria (see Box 16) to the critical domains of change identified.

---

### BOX 16: CRITERIA AND QUESTIONS FOR SELECTING STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

#### Leverage points:

- What change processes are already taking place in the system, and how do they influence what Hivos aims to achieve?
- What and where are the leverage points, opportunities and challenges in the next 3-5 years?
- Which influential actors and processes do we have links to, or could build links to?

#### Mandate:

- What is Hivos' legitimacy to act in this system? Why?

#### Collaboration and influence:

- Who else is working on related agendas, similar/different to us?

#### Hivos' unique contribution:

- What does Hivos bring to the change process? What are we good at?

#### Feasibility:

- What is our potential to influence the situation?
-

2. Prioritise a limited number or a cluster of changes within the critical domains of change that you think Hivos can address in a consistent and effective way, and where Hivos or the partnership can realistically make a difference in view of the context and the time perspective. Document your reasons and the assumptions you make.
3. Check and sharpen your priorities and assumptions by submitting them to critique and feedback from people who have no direct stake in the programme or from experts on the issue and/or the context. You can do this in several ways, but Ritual dissent is effective - and fun.
4. Identify and document assumptions. What are the assumptions underlying our strategic choices, for each criterion?

### LOOK BACK, REVIEW AND FINE-TUNE

What do the outcomes of this step mean for the initial outcome of the previous step?  
Do we need to make any adjustments? Why?

> Review and fine-tune



## STEP 6 MAP PATHWAYS OF CHANGE

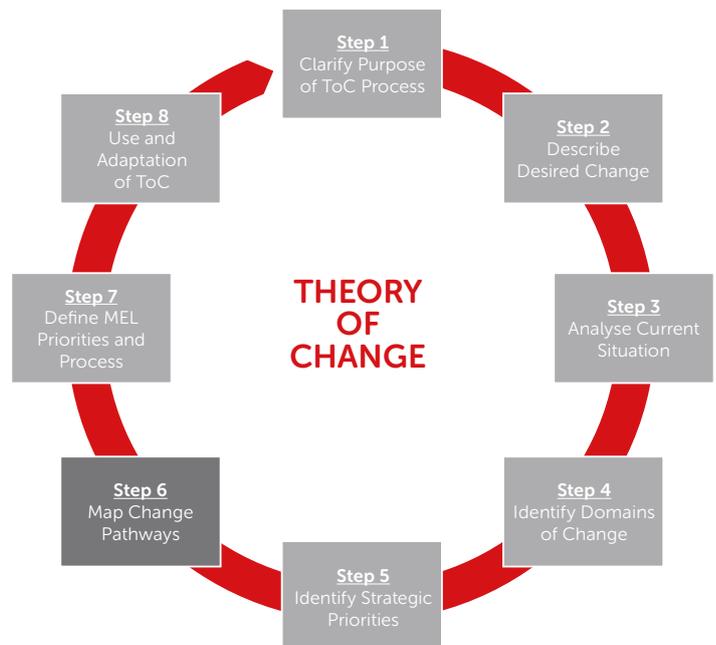
### WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?

Pathways of change are a projection of the envisaged change process into the future, based on what we know of the current situation and our views and beliefs about how change happens.

Mapping 'pathways of change' is done by working backwards from the long-term desired change, asking ourselves what needs to change for the desired change to occur.

At the same time, we are also unpacking and testing our thinking about how the change process may evolve from the current situation to the future.

Pathways of change, or causal pathways, can be pictured as a series of intermediate changes realised, often called 'results chains', or in the form of a less linear representation, such as a flow chart, web or system map. It is essential to indicate the inter-relations between elements, feedback mechanisms, and how the process is expected to evolve over time, although in real life that will never be linear: think of backlashes and recurrent processes. This means that the pathways and underlying ToC need regular adaptation, in response to developments in the situation and new information.



### ESSENCE

Mapping the change pathways backwards from the desired change and the domains of change.

### CORE QUESTION

How do we think the change process may evolve? What needs to happen before the next positive step in the process can take place?

### OUTPUT

Change pathways or change map with underlying assumptions.

### CHALLENGES

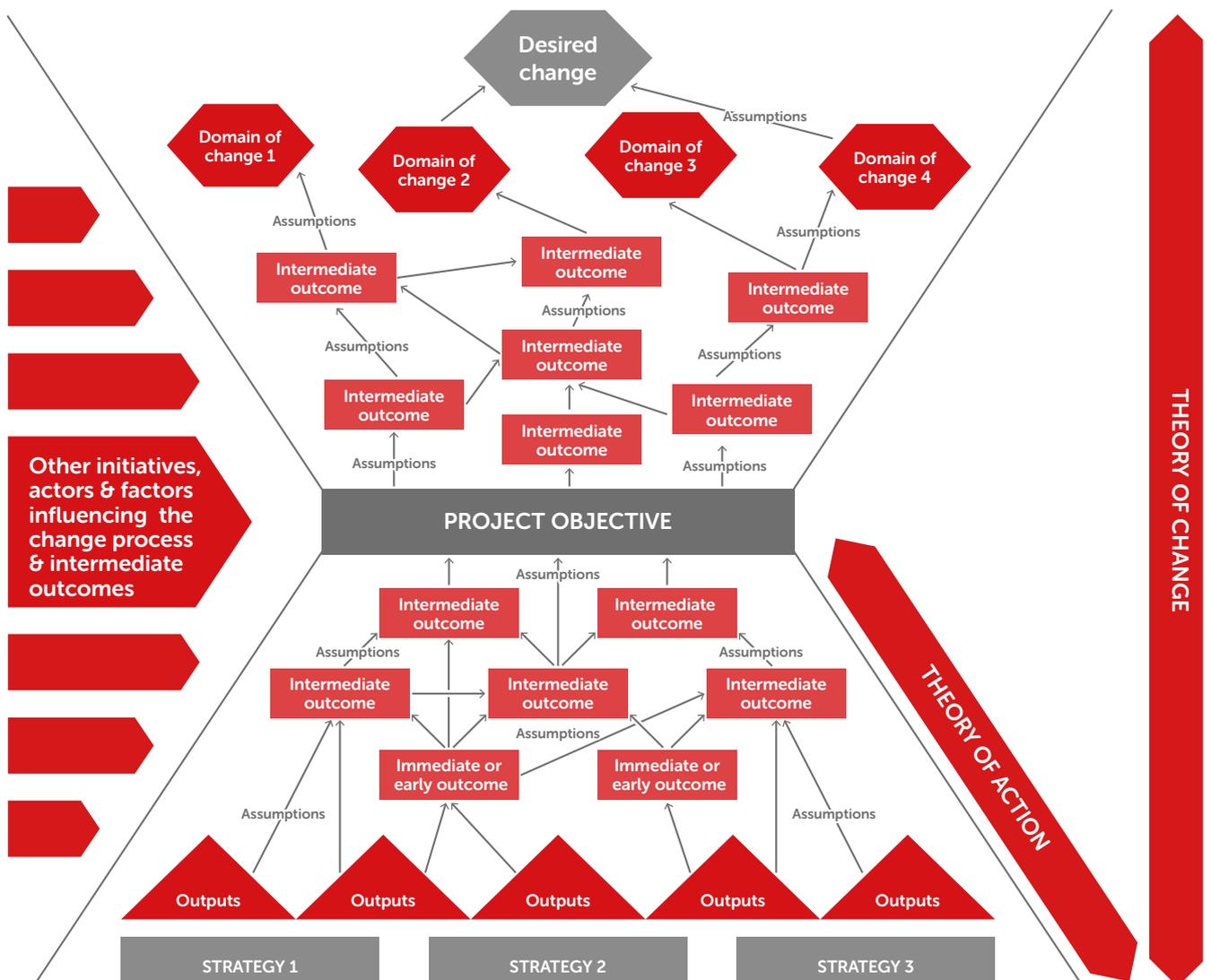
- To find a good balance between a too detailed, time consuming mapping process and a superficial, 'quick & dirty' approach that reproduces stereotype thinking and adds no value.
- Different purposes and levels of ToC thinking require differentiating the emphasis and time invested in parts of the process, and the level of detail needed.

## KEY POINTS TO CONSIDER

- As explained in Step 1, there are three different options for this step, depending on your purpose with this process, the level of ToC thinking that is required, and the ToC thinking that is already available about the issue at hand, for example in a thematic policy or strategy paper, or a higher level programme document.

**Figure 5:**

The hourglass: change pathways at different levels



- Decide how to go about this step by answering the following questions:

- On which level(s) of ToC thinking should we focus? Why?
- What does that mean for the process and level of detail of developing the pathways?
- Is higher level ToC thinking available for the issue at hand? What is the best way to use it?

The different options are explained on the following pages. Table 4 provides an overview of the options for different purposes.

**TABLE 4: THREE OPTIONS FOR MAPPING PATHWAYS OF CHANGE**

PURPOSE	OPTION	PRODUCT	POINTS OF ATTENTION, LEVEL OF DETAIL
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Organisational ToC</li> <li>• Thematic policy or strategy design</li> </ul>	Higher level ToC thinking: upper half hourglass	Thematic policy or overarching strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No detailed pathways, but change or system map indicating main change mechanisms, overall strategies and key assumptions</li> <li>• Project level is not relevant</li> </ul>
Project design with an objective for which higher level ToC thinking is available	Project level ToC (ToA): lower half hourglass	Project level pathways of change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Make existing ToC thinking specific for context, actors, power &amp; gender</li> <li>• Identify and explain how the project objective relates to higher level ToC</li> <li>• Elaborate the project pathways of change in detail</li> <li>• Clearly articulate assumptions about cause-effect relations and underpin by available evidence</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Project design with an objective for which no higher level ToC thinking is available</li> <li>• Project design for which full pathways of change are required for a specific issue or domain of change.</li> </ul>	Full ToC	Full pathways of change	<p>Articulate the full pathways of change at both levels, but:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Upper half of the hourglass: not much detail. Clarify overall ToC thinking and identify key assumptions.</li> <li>• Lower half of the hourglass: elaborate pathways of change in detail, and clearly articulate assumptions about cause-effect relations and underpin by available evidence</li> </ul>

## OPTION A DEVELOPING PATHWAYS WITHIN AND BETWEEN DOMAINS OF CHANGE

Option A is about developing pathways of change at the level of the Sphere of Influence and the Sphere of Interest: the upper part of the hourglass. (See Figures 9 and 10 for an explanation of the Three Spheres).

### TOOLS FOR THOUGHT

- Mapping: pathways, change or system map, web, results chains, etc.

### TASKS

1. Keep the outcomes of the comprehensive situation analysis in Step 3 in mind and map the change pathways within and between the domains of change, working backwards. Always do this with other people, as their different perspectives on change and the different assumptions people make are of crucial value for both the process and the product.

**NB** Mapping pathways with more than 6 people in one group does not usually work well. If more people are involved, work in subgroups.

- Start from the critical domains of change and the strategic priorities for the mid-term you identified in Step 5. As you cannot map the whole system in detail, focus on a limited number of key intermediate changes (3-4 for each domain of change), that capture the essence of the change process in that pathway. Map backwards what needs to change before that situation/ condition can be achieved or occur. Use all the space you need for the map and note that it does not need to be linear!
- Formulate intermediate changes in the pathway or map as a changed/realised situation, not as an activity or objective! Name the stakeholders/actors involved and their changed behaviour. Who is doing what differently? What is there that was not there before? (See the following examples).

How to formulate intermediate changes as a result, as a changed situation?

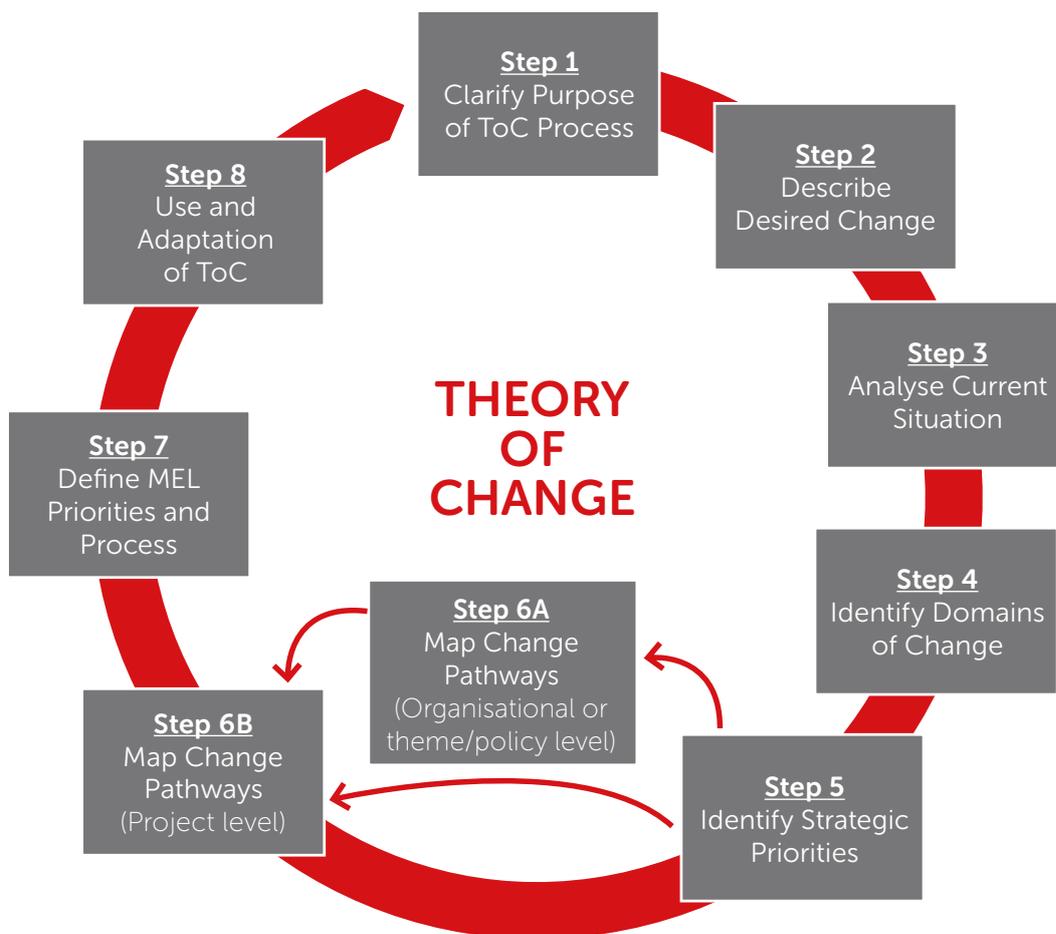
**Don't:** 'Involve media in advocacy about the food system'

**Do:** 'Well-informed media report proactively and critically about the food system debate'

**Don't:** 'SRHR information for youth' (SRHR = Sexual & Reproductive Health & Rights)

**Do:** 'Young people (F/M) have access to youth-friendly SRHR information'

- Work backwards and note assumptions you are making: for example about the stakeholders' reactions to a changed situation, conditions that need to be in place, about the causality you assume in the process. Discuss how context factors, social and economic conditions and mechanisms, power and gender relations, and other factors influence the change process you are mapping.
2. You will probably find that there are linkages between the change pathways: realised changes in one pathway may reinforce the change process in another. Likewise, a step in one pathway may be needed to enable a next step in another one. Two changes in different pathways may together lead to a condition needed for further change in both. Draw the



**Figure 8:**  
Stepwise approach: Step 6A and/or 6B

linkages between the pathways or between specific intermediate changes. Note assumptions you are making about why and how they are linked.

3. Make explicit the assumptions underlying your logic in the pathways or change map. What do we assume about:
  - causal relations in the pathways or change map and mutually reinforcing effects between different pathways;
  - the response of stakeholders and other actors to changes in the status quo;
  - (pre)conditions in the context that are (or need to be) in place for the change to occur.

Questions:

- If X changes, will Z really happen? Why? Under which conditions would it work?
- Are our assumptions about causality in the pathways valid for all people? What about poor people, women?
- How do our beliefs and preferences for specific types of change shape our thinking about the pathways? What are we taking for granted? What would challenge our assumptions?
- What evidence do we have that supports our assumptions about causality?

4. Explore strategic options.

**NB.** As we are developing a high-level ToC (upper half of the hourglass), for example for a thematic policy document, we do not elaborate strategic options for context-specific situations. The process still focuses on an overall Hivos policy level.

Go back to the outcomes of the conversation in Step 5 (Strategic priorities) about leverage points, opportunities and challenges, and why Hivos can make a difference in the selected priority domains. Use that analysis to explore further how Hivos could be most effective in contributing to the changes in the pathways. Brainstorm about a broad range of possible strategic options to influence the process and other key actors. Identify relevant well-established strategies that Hivos has expertise and experience in, but focus especially on potentially innovative, out-of-the-box strategic thinking. Be creative and challenge each other. Review the latest insights from research and other organisations or companies that are relevant for this area of change.

5. When strategic choices have been made, document what key strategies Hivos will employ in this thematic domain, and why these have been selected. Document the main assumptions and available evidence that support them.

## **OPTION B** DEVELOPING PATHWAYS FOR A PROJECT THEORY OF CHANGE OR THEORY OF ACTION

Option B is about developing pathways of change at the project level and concerns the Sphere of Control and the Sphere of Influence: the lower part of the hourglass. (See Figures 9 and 10 for an explanation of the Three Spheres).

When the higher level ToC has been mapped (or revisited when it concerns an existing ToC), you need to zoom in on the role and contribution of the project at hand to the larger change process, from a strategic point of view and in relation to what others do.

The project theory of action specifies what and how Hivos or the partnership will contribute to the achievement of the project objective, in the perspective of longer term change. It tells the story of the project, explaining why we do what we do and why we think that will work. The essence, core question and output are slightly different from a higher level ToC.

### **ESSENCE**

Mapping the pathways from the project objective to the current situation and explore strategic options, as a basis for the project strategy/ies.

### **CORE QUESTION**

What is needed to realise the project objective and how can we best achieve it?

### **OUTPUT**

Project pathways explaining how and why the project strategies are expected to lead to the achievement of the anticipated results, with underlying assumptions.

## TOOLS FOR THOUGHT (see section 8.1)

- Mapping: pathways, change or system map, web, results chains, etc.
- Three Spheres: Control, Influence, Interest
- Necessary & Sufficient check

## TASKS

1. Formulate the project objective(s), related to one or more of the prioritised (intermediate) changes Hivos has decided to influence (in Step 5 Strategic priorities).

Or: if the project objective is a given (for example in a 'Call for Proposals'), explore how it relates to the priorities identified and the ToC thinking articulated at that level.

**NB** Do this together with key stakeholders in the project.

The project objective should be:

- a change statement at outcome level (sphere of influence);
  - ambitious but realistic for the duration of (this phase of) the project;
  - gender specific: Is the objective as relevant for women as it is for men? If not, can it be made of relevance for women? If necessary, reformulate the objective.
  - phrased as specific as possible: Who and/or what should have changed in what way? Specify the groups or actors directly targeted and the intended 'end beneficiaries' for women and men, make more distinctions where relevant.
2. Map the pathways of change from the project objective backwards. What needs to change before the situation described in the objective can be achieved or occur? Use all the space you need for the map and note that it does not need to be linear!
    - Formulate each step in the pathway or map as a result, a realised situation, not as an activity or objective! Name the stakeholders/actors involved and their changed behaviour. Who is doing what differently? What is there that was not there before? (See the following examples).

How to formulate intermediate changes as a result, as a changed situation?

**Don't:** 'Training of community leaders'

**Do:** '[number] community leaders finished the full training and have committed to follow-up plans'

**Don't:** 'Promote the concept bill of law'

**Do:** 'Parliamentarians have adapted the concept bill of law in line with the CSO proposal'

- Discuss how context factors, social and economic conditions and mechanisms, power and gender relations, and other factors influence the change process you are mapping.
- Indicate the linkages between the pathways: where and how do they relate or influence each other?
- Note assumptions you are making, for example about the stakeholders' reactions to a changed situation, about conditions that need to be in place, about the causality you assume in the process.
- Think about what unintended results there could be.



3. When you have your initial pathways mapped out, ask yourself to what extent the intermediate outcomes work out differently for men and women:
  - Are women likely to benefit at least equally from the changes envisaged, and to have access to and control over these benefits?
  - What could the unintended, negative effects for women be?
  - What assumptions do we make about gender roles, and the gender division of access to and control over resources, workload and decision-making?

Review your pathway(s) if necessary to this effect or – if that is not possible – make sure that in the next task (Explore strategic options) you explore and include specific strategies to make the aspired change beneficial for women.

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### **BOX 17: EXAMPLES OF PITFALLS RELATED TO GENDER**

#### *Examples of unintended outcomes of interventions for women*

Unintended adverse effects for women and girls are extra workloads; withdrawal of contribution to the household by men; unsafe and unhealthy work and travel conditions; increased school drop-out rate for girls; violence; corrective rape, etc.

#### *Examples of gender-related assumptions that require further evidence*

- Household access to biogas contributes to a reduction of women's workload.
- Improved rule of law guarantees improvement of the rights and position of women.
- Greater access to information contributes to women being better-informed and increased women's participation in decision-making.

4. When you have your pathways mapped out to roughly the current state of affairs, go through them again from the bottom or present up: is the flow of subsequent changes logical? Are steps missing? What else might each step lead to – unintended consequences, positive or negative? Are the steps together sufficient? If not, what other supporting factors are needed?

You may find you are making jumps that are too big, or that you have overlooked something important. Adjust your map.

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### **BOX 18: NECESSARY & SUFFICIENT?**

Thinking in terms of 'necessary' and 'sufficient' can help you check if there are gaps that are too large. Ask yourself two questions:

- Is this change/condition necessary for the next one to happen? (if not, delete it) and:
- Is this change/condition sufficient for the next one to happen? (if not, what is missing?)

5. When you have your pathways map more or less complete, use the 'Three Spheres' framework, to distinguish between parts of the change process in terms of control and influence, and in terms of time perspective (see section 8.1 for more explanation).

Apply the Three Spheres model to your project pathways:

- Which part of the pathways, which anticipated results, are within the control of the project or partnership? Why?
- Where is the point that the anticipated results concern the use others are making of the project's outputs, or their response to them? Is the assumed link of that outcome with the project output direct, or indirect? Why?

Discuss the answers to these questions and review how realistic the pathways are in view of the given timeframe. Adjust where necessary.

## 6. Explore strategic options

- a. Focus on those parts of the pathways that are within the Sphere of Control and Influence. Brainstorm about as many strategies to influence these changes you can think of. Challenge each other to be as creative as possible and to think out-of-the-box. Do not judge or consider feasibility yet. Collect, list, dive deeper into interesting/innovative/challenging options and ideas. Create a wide-ranging, creative menu of strategies to choose from. Do not decide yet.

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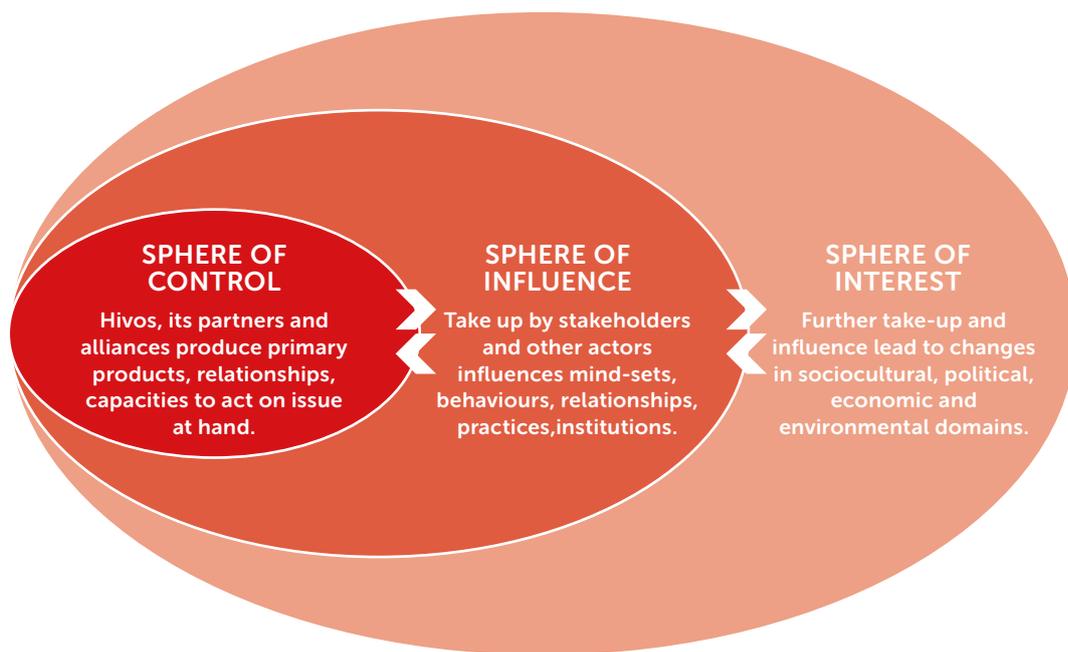
*For example, if one change to achieve is: 'Parliamentarians adapt the concept bill of law in line with the CSO proposal', what strategies – by you, partners, allies, separately or in coalition – could influence this change? What has been tried before? What has been exciting elsewhere? What would you love to try out in this setting?*

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- b. Explore the strategic options in-depth using the questions below.
- What change processes are already taking place in the system, and how do they influence the outcomes we aim to achieve? What is the best way to strategically link up with or respond to ongoing processes? Why?
  - What are the leverage points, opportunities and challenges in the next 3 years?
  - What is our potential to influence the situation? What access do we have to the influential actors?
  - What do we bring to the change process? What are we good at? Where and how do we make a difference with our limited means?
  - What could be the most effective in this setting: to choose a niche of our own, leverage others' efforts, seek collaboration with other programmes, etc.? Why?

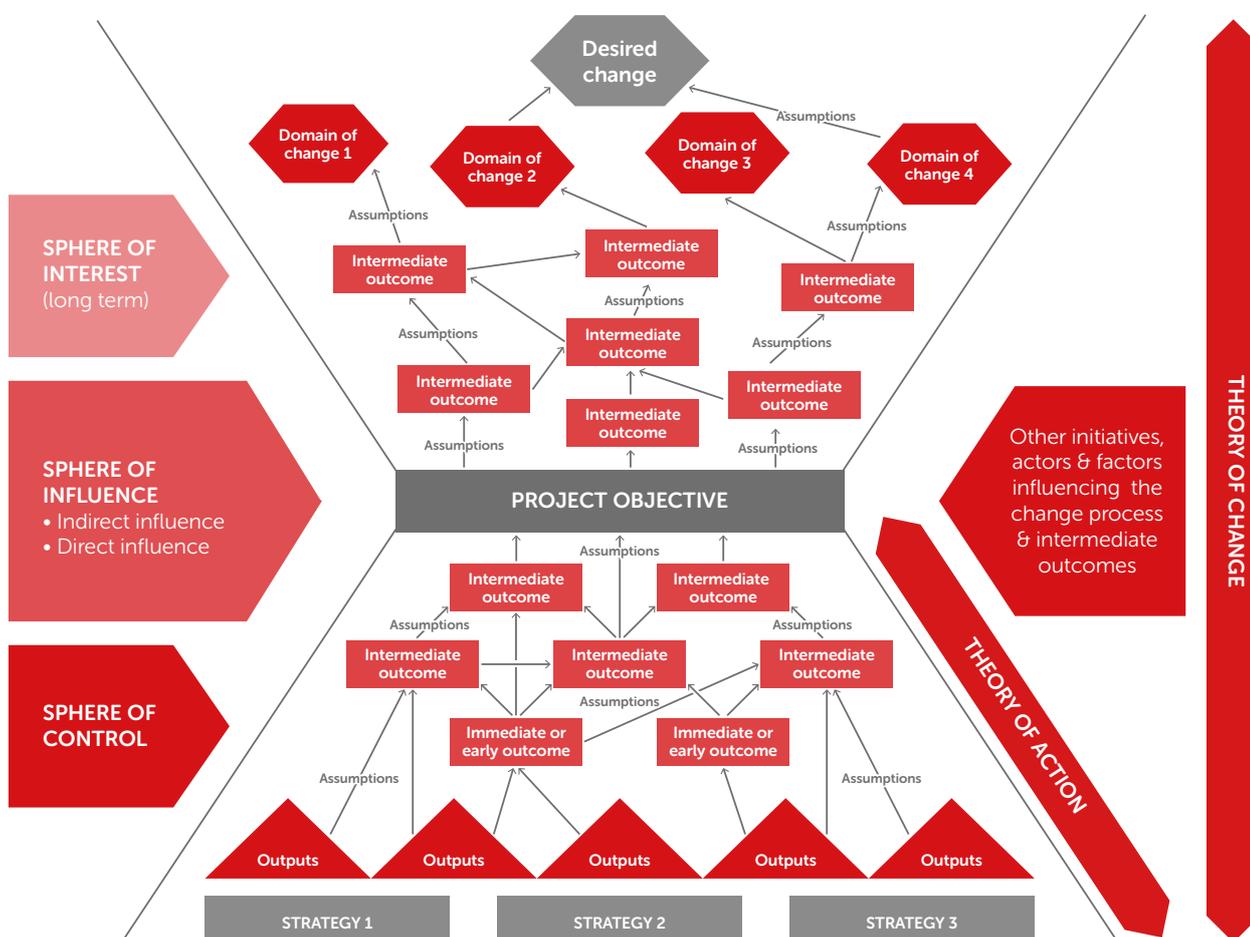
See box 19 for [Questions for diving deeper into exploring and assessing strategic options](#).

- c. Choose the strategies that emerge as the most relevant, promising and feasible and note the assumptions underlying their choice: why do we consider them the most effective, given the context, capacities of the organisation or partnership, opportunities, etc.



**Figure 9:** Three spheres: Control, Influence, Interest

**Figure 10 (below):** Change pathways with 'Three Spheres'



7. Make explicit the assumptions underlying your logic in the pathways and your strategic choices. Note assumptions.

## **ASSUMPTIONS**

What do we assume about:

- the causal relation between each step in a pathway
- the causal relations or mutually reinforcing effects between different pathways
- the response of stakeholders and other actors to specific project interventions and the changes that we expect to see as a result
- (pre)conditions in the context that are (or need to be) in place for the change to occur.

Which assumptions are underlying our strategic choices?

*Helping questions:*

- If X changes, will Z really happen? Why? Under which conditions would it work?
- Are our assumptions about causality in the pathways valid for all stakeholders, or otherwise affected/interested people? What about poor people, women?
- How do our beliefs and preferences for specific types of change shape our thinking about the pathways? What are we taking for granted? What would challenge our assumptions?
- What evidence do we have that supports our assumptions about causality and the effectiveness of strategies?

## **LOOK BACK, REVIEW AND FINE-TUNE**

What do the outcomes of this step mean for the initial outcome of the previous step?  
Do we need to make any adjustments? Why?

> Review and fine-tune

---

## **BOX 19: QUESTIONS FOR DIVING DEEPER INTO EXPLORING AND ASSESSING STRATEGIC OPTIONS**

### **Other actors, their position and perspective**

- How do stakeholders perceive the situation? How do they think about change and how it could be achieved (their 'theories of change')? What do we (not) know about these actors' perspectives, interests, etc.?
- Which key actors need to be involved to make the desired change possible?
- Which key actors represent a positive influence on the change process and share a similar purpose and values with us? Can we involve them?
- Which key actors represent a negative influence and what does that mean for the likelihood of achieving our objectives? Can we mitigate or counter the negative forces, or are they beyond our control?
- What changes need to take place in the relationships of stakeholders/actors to generate synergies and shared interests in the change process?

### **Collaboration and influence**

- Who else is working on related issues or agendas, similar/different to us?
- Can key actors be influenced by collaborating with them?
- What are the options for multi-actor collaboration?
- What are the advantages and risks of multi-actor collaboration?
- Can we involve/create alliances with actors whose actions work for our goals, but from different value systems/concerns? How? What are the risks in doing so?
- Can we strengthen like-minded actors whose influence is now weak, in a way that benefits the change process? How?
- What type of strategies and actions can we think of to minimise the impact of actors whose influence is blocking or hindering the intended change process?
- How can we best work alongside or in collaboration with other actors and processes to achieve outcomes more effectively than we could on our own? What are the common and complementary capabilities that we each possess?

### **Power**

- How can we help to create/promote more empowering and horizontal power dynamics?
- How can we ensure that decision-making spaces recognise and integrate the diversity of perspectives, identities and knowledge that exists among the different stakeholders involved?
- How can we prevent and/or manage conflicts deriving from processes of exclusion?

### **Gender**

- Are specific strategies needed to make the outcomes we aim to achieve equally beneficial for women?
  - What are the possible barriers for women – which specific categories of women – to participate and benefit from the project and are these barriers being addressed?
-

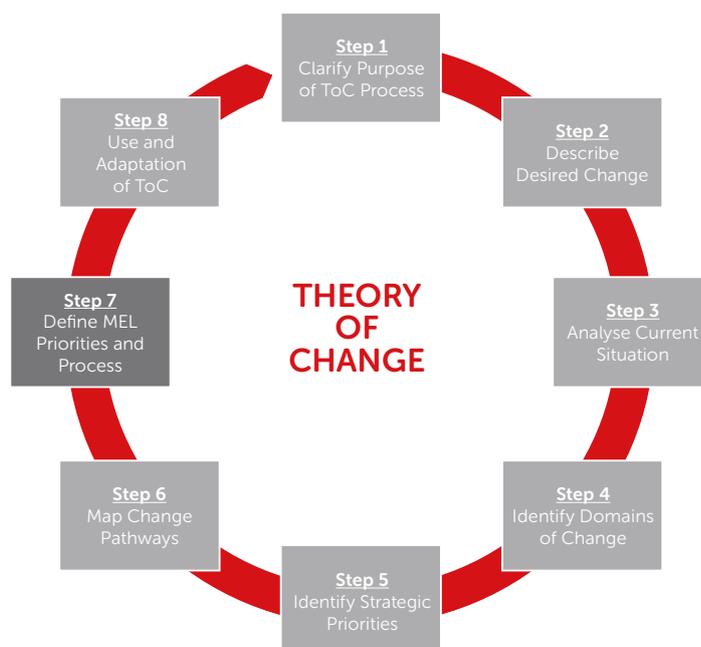
## STEP 7 DEFINE MONITORING, EVALUATION AND LEARNING PRIORITIES AND PROCESS

### WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?

Thinking and working hard to support change, we want to know what has changed.

We need a process to know if and how a project or programme is actually contributing to the envisaged longer-term change and if our underlying theory of change is valid. Tracking and documenting the change process as it evolves forms the basis for monitoring, evaluation, learning about what works and building an evidence base.

The ToC is the frame for distributing iterative learning and critical thinking, not just at the design stage but throughout implementation.



### ESSENCE

Being clear about what we need to know to be effective, demonstrate effectiveness and learn, throughout implementation.

### CORE QUESTION

What information do we need to track and analyse the change process as it evolves, and to learn about assumptions for improvement?

### OUTPUT

Monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL) priorities and process, with clear actions for regular monitoring and learning – updating our ToC.

### CHALLENGES

- Choosing the critical areas for enquiry;
- The tension between accountability ('proving') and learning ('improving');
- Selecting and collecting only the information we will use.

## KEY POINTS TO CONSIDER

1. A ToC-based monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL) process encompasses more than the assessment of results of interventions against the plan. It is about tracking change in the system in order to know how to adjust our ToC and strategies. It involves monitoring short-term changes in the environment that our ToC says are important. For example, small changes in the responsiveness of key actors to our change efforts will build up to outcomes over time. It involves periodic evaluation of what has changed – planned, unplanned, unforeseen and new developments. It involves learning about what is significant about these changes, for whom, and how we should adapt our ToC.

2. Using our ToC-based MEL process for learning about what works, for testing and validating the ToC and building an evidence base implies monitoring results and assumptions. We need to know if they prove 'true' in reality and what we missed if that is not the case.
3. A ToC-based (MEL) process and framework needs to focus not only on the level of the project objective and the ToA, but also on outcomes that are 'higher up' in the chain and further away in time. Without monitoring changes and assumptions in the upper part of the 'hourglass', we will not be able to know – and make plausible – that the project contributes to the desired change.
4. Which MEL priorities are defined and how the process is designed depends largely on who participates in the process of doing this step. Different stakeholders will find different things relevant and significant. So, before you start, ask yourself the following questions: Who defines and participates in our MEL process and system? Who defines what is meaningful result information (for whom?) and what are relevant 'signs of change'? (Think of gender differentiation!) Who should be involved or consulted to ensure that the perspectives of key stakeholders inform the MEL priorities and process?

### TOOLS FOR THOUGHT (see section 8.1)

- Critical Areas of Enquiry
- Criteria for indicator selection
- Relevant & Measurable

### TASKS

1. Identify which intended outcomes and assumptions we need to know about. Look again at your pathway(s), desired change and assumptions at all levels and identify 5 to 8 areas of enquiry (see Box 20). Your areas of enquiry can concern assumptions as well as intermediate changes/ outcomes and should be relevant to understanding key aspects of your change pathways.  
Choosing critical areas of enquiry will help you to focus your monitoring on what truly matters and to identify knowledge gaps and a learning (or research) agenda for the project.

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#### BOX 20: CRITICAL AREAS OF ENQUIRY

Areas of enquiry are parts of our change pathways or change map that:

- concern specific outcomes, assumptions or factors that we need to learn more about. For example, because they are critical to the change process, they are challenging or require innovative strategies about which we are uncertain how they will unfold;
  - we need to understand in order to know how, why and for whom a situation is actually changing, how significant that is and what the implications are;
  - where we know least about the dynamics and actors involved;
  - concern assumptions with a high risk of being invalid (with big consequences);
  - we need to monitor in order to understand how the process works.
-

2. Discuss and answer the following questions:
  - What do you want to know about these areas?
  - Why are these a priority?
  - What are you curious about and why?
  - For what purpose and how would you use the information?
3. Your choice of critical areas of enquiry also indicates which changes at outcome level you consider most significant and interesting. Explore with relevant stakeholders which indicators ('signs of change') would most meaningfully indicate that the anticipated intermediate change is actually taking place. Take gender differences into account when selecting indicators.
4. Use the critical areas of enquiry and the outcome indicators to identify what information you need to collect to be able to explain the changes and validate assumptions. Discuss who needs to be involved in data collection, its analysis and use, and in learning – and why. Formulate a learning agenda for the project: what are the questions we would like to be able to answer?

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### **BOX 21: SOME CORE QUESTIONS TO ANSWER**

- Which information/data /evidence needs to be collected, by whom, how, and when?
  - What will this information tell us about our ToC or ToA?
  - What is the intended use of the information or evidence?
  - Is another entity or actor already collecting the data we need? Do we have access to that information, can we use it?
  - Are we capable of collecting the information (expertise, costs, capacity, etc.)?
- 

5. Agree on and describe the MEL process, the roles and responsibilities of everyone involved, the process of data collection, documentation and reporting. Make sure that you plan the learning process: When and how do we revisit the ToC and reflect on what works? Who should be involved? How and when does our learning agenda connect to specific moments in implementation? When and how do we evaluate, with what purpose?
6. Note assumptions.

### **ASSUMPTIONS**

- Which assumptions underlie our choice of areas of enquiry and outcome indicators?
- Which assumptions are we making about the implementation and use of our MEL framework (roles, tasks, ownership, etc.)?

### **LOOK BACK, REVIEW AND FINE-TUNE**

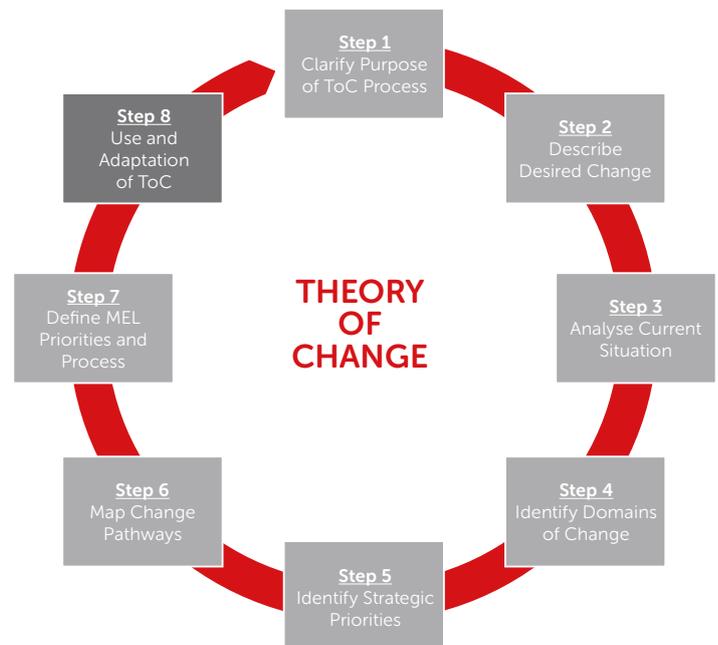
What do the outcomes of this step mean for the initial outcome of the previous step?  
Do we need to make any adjustments? Why?  
> Review and fine-tune

## STEP 8 USE AND ADAPTATION OF A TOC

### WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?

To be most effective, ToC use needs to be firmly embedded in the process cycle of the project and the organisation. When a ToC is not used to reflect on implementation and regularly revisited and updated, the investment in developing it is largely lost.

How, then, do you use a ToC during project implementation to plan, navigate strategically, monitor, and learn?



### ESSENCE

Use the ToC for integrated learning and decision-making, regularly adapted to reflect new developments, challenges and opportunities.

### CORE QUESTIONS

- What insights about the change process are being produced through our MEL process?
- How should we adapt and update our ToC?
- How, then, should strategies and planning be adapted in this project cycle?
- When will we next review our ToC and implementation process? Who should be involved?

### OUTPUT

- ToC documentation that makes clear how the ToC will be used, when and by who, to track and analyse information in order to learn about and improve implementation.
- Up-to-date ToC products, regularly informed by the MEL process, which can inform decision-making and planning.

### CHALLENGES

- Aligning learning from and revision of the ToC so that it feeds into organisational planning processes can be difficult as time is usually limited.
- Ensuring that all project participants understand and appreciate that ToC use takes effort and organisation.
- Time and incentives for reflection, learning and documentation should be explicitly planned for in order to involve a wide range of project participants in the MEL process and ToC review.

## KEY POINTS TO CONSIDER

1. Integrate ToC use into the project cycle to promote an ongoing learning process.

A ToC process is not a one-off exercise in the design phase of a programme, but implies an ongoing action-learning cycle. In order to effectively learn from ToC use, we need to anchor reflection processes in the project cycle. That means that time and incentives for reflection, learning and documentation must be consciously organised. Regular reflection sessions with staff, partners and stakeholders to take stock of experiences and results need to become a habit.

ToC-led reflection sessions are effective when they become specific responsibilities that support regular management processes such as annual planning and reporting cycles. Revisiting ToC pathways, assumptions and strategies can then become integrated into the planning process. For reporting, using the ToC as the reference point helps to focus MEL reports on key change areas, as well as activities and outputs.

2. Use an adaptive management approach.

Adaptive – or iterative – planning and management is the appropriate management approach for making optimal use of a ToC. A thorough and robust ToC process is the foundation, together with appropriate data collection, analysis and learning. Adaptive management enables the project or initiative to respond to emerging changes and new insights in time. (See Box 22: 'Planning in the face of complexity' and Box 23: 'Planning in uncertain, complex situations and processes').

A ToC is a projection of the envisaged change process into an uncertain future. The ToC needs regular revisiting and updating to the real situation as knowledge emerges from implementation experience. Doing so allows for iterative planning:

- moving strategically forward from year to year;
- using the results of monitoring and learning to review the ToC and critical assumptions;
- reviewing strategies and plans in response to emerging changes inside and outside the programme.

Review of the ToC can occur at regular intervals or be triggered by particular issues. These can include: context changes; stakeholder shifts; operational problems; when there are indications that a critical assumption might not be valid; or when processes take unexpected turns.

## TOOLS FOR THOUGHT

- Analysis of when and how to link ToC-learning to project management processes.

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## BOX 22: PLANNING IN THE FACE OF COMPLEXITY

Planning does not become obsolete in the face of complexity, but it does require different approaches and formats. The key function of plans is not to elaborate details of a situation expected in the future, but to provide a basis and guide for decision-making throughout the course of the intervention. Plans should not, therefore, lay tracks towards a desired future that must be rigidly followed. They should, instead, be sufficiently adaptive to incorporate new developments, challenges and opportunities.

Measures are needed to alter prevailing incentives and resource allocation. Less time and resources should be spent on upfront planning and more on processes to monitor and feed back learning from implementation. Deviations from plans should not be seen necessarily as negative as they can provide important information about the implementation reality of an intervention. Unforeseen effects, as well as contradictions or puzzles, can provide useful clues about relevant changes, new challenges or innovative ways to handle a situation, which can help to improve implementation.

*From: 'A guide for planning and strategy development in the face of complexity', by Richard Hummelbrunner and Harry Jones (ODI 2013).*

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### TASKS

1. Document how the ToC will be used – and by who – to track and analyse information in order to learn about and improve implementation.
  - Consider appropriate leadership roles, responsibilities and resources for ensuring regular use of the ToC.
  - Consider how to involve project partners and stakeholders in regular ToC reviewing and learning processes.
  - Revise the document after reviews and when situations change, for example, new partners, participants or donors join the project.
2. Make the ToC visible in the daily life of the team and project participants.
  - Create a large-scale copy of the ToC visual with key assumptions. Place it on the wall of the team's meeting room. Use a copy of the same visual to place in a prominent place where partners' and project stakeholders meet and work.
  - Create a regular monthly agenda item about a relevant aspect of the ToC for discussion at team and partners' meetings.
  - Create project milestones about reflecting on the ToC and MEL analysis. Ensure ToC-related milestones coincide with reporting so that the two processes support each other.
3. Ensure the ToC products are up-to-date, engaging and appropriate for different uses and users. Good quality ToC use relies on documentation being available relating to different stages of its development and use. At the same time, documentation and ToC products need to be accessible and efficient for regular use. It is important to ensure that ToC products are engaging enough for project participants to avoid falling into bureaucracy.

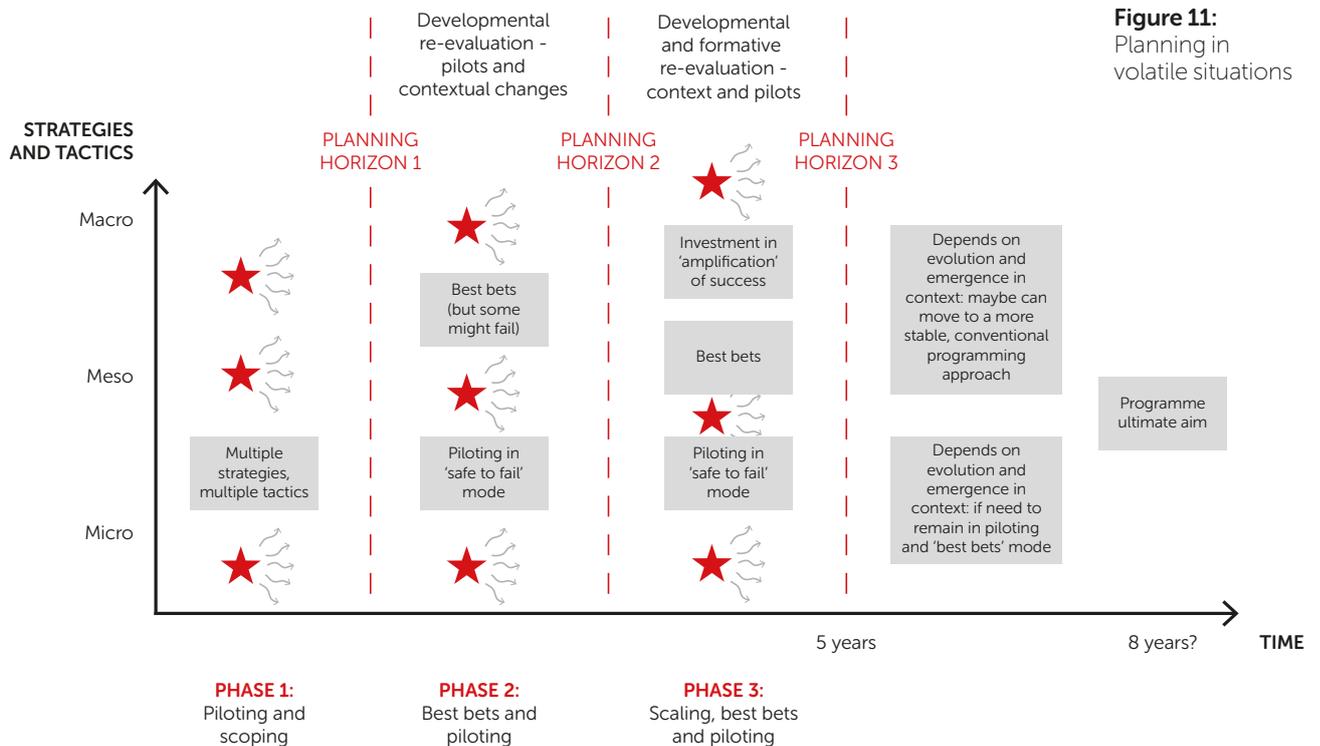
## BOX 23: PLANNING IN UNCERTAIN, COMPLEX SITUATIONS AND PROCESSES

Projects in highly volatile contexts, such as conflict areas, are often so uncertain and unpredictable that planning for a longer period is not useful. They have a short 'planning horizon'. Thinking about the project's ToC of how change might happen is still important, but will likely focus more on identifying opportunities and positive change agents than on mapping out specific pathways. Using scenario planning is also an option. The ToC process will be one of continuous monitoring and analysis of the situation and adaptation of strategies, using small windows of opportunities that might open and grow.

One strategy is seeding many small projects, using multiple strategies and piloting in a safe-to-fail mode, and see what emerges over time in the context as stable and effective enough to develop further and expand.

Figure 11 illustrates how this iterative strategy could be developed into a whole programme approach over the time-frame of a programme. This would rely on the adaptive and iterative use of the ToC as outlined.

The same approach is appropriate for social innovation experiments. However, making the assumptions explicit that are underlying small initiatives and experiments, about why we choose to do them and how we think they might work out, remains relevant in all cases!



**Figure 11:**  
Planning in volatile situations

Vogel, 2013

# 6 TOC AS A PRODUCT

The ToC product is the outcome of a ToC process and represents the theory of change of an organisation or a project. There is no fixed format; the ToC product can be presented in many forms. Often, it is best captured in a combination of a narrative and one or more diagrams or visualisations of the envisaged change process. A ToC is never a simple story. Text alone can become dense and jargon-filled and does not speak to the imagination. But pictures alone cannot tell the whole story. Visualisations should support the narrative, and vice versa.

Keep in mind that a theory of change, or a theory of action, should be 'a living product'! A ToC is a reflection of the thinking of a specific group of people, at a specific point in time. It remains relevant for a limited period of time and needs regular reflection, review and adaptation to keep its utility.

## TOC NARRATIVE

The content, length and level of detail of a ToC narrative is linked to its nature and purpose, e.g. a funding proposal, a strategic plan, policy paper, internal or external communication. The presentation varies with different audiences or users and, in the case of a funding proposal, a format may be provided by the donor.

The narrative needs to cover:

- The stakeholder groups involved in the ToC development process;
- The desired change;
- Current situation, describing key actors and factors influencing the envisaged process, including power and gender dynamics;
- Objectives and contribution of the project to the desired change (specify time frame);
- Main strategic choices and rationale;
- Critical assumptions underlying strategic choices and change pathways (cause-effect relations)
- Explanation of the diagram or visualisation (if any);
- Monitoring, evaluation and learning process;
- Description of the use of the ToC during implementation.

Depending on the purpose and use of the ToC product, other components could be:

- Risk analysis and mitigation measures related to the critical assumptions;
- Logframe (if required);
- Learning or Research agenda.

## VISUALISATION OF THE TOC PRODUCT

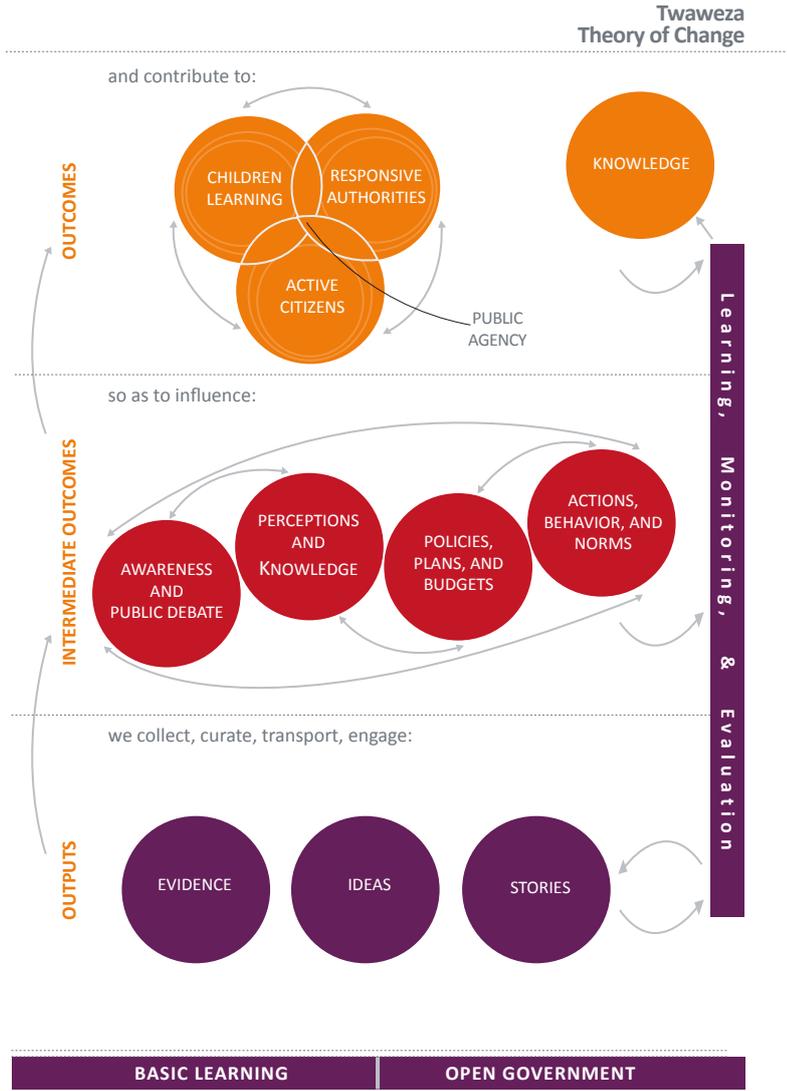
An important function of visualising the ToC product is communicating the ToC to people who were not involved in the process of developing it. This means that it must be understandable and attractive: what message do you wish to convey, which story do you want to tell? Think about the purpose of your visualisation, and who will view or use it. Use more than one visualisation if that helps to convey different aspects of the ToC. Thinking about a good way to visualise the ToC can clarify your thinking further. It forces you to think about what questions outsiders might have and to structure the visualisation so that it focuses on what needs attention. The ToC visualisation (see also 3.3) can take whatever form works for the participants in the process. It often presents the envisaged change process as a system map picturing the key actors and factors and how they relate and influence the change process; as a set of pathways

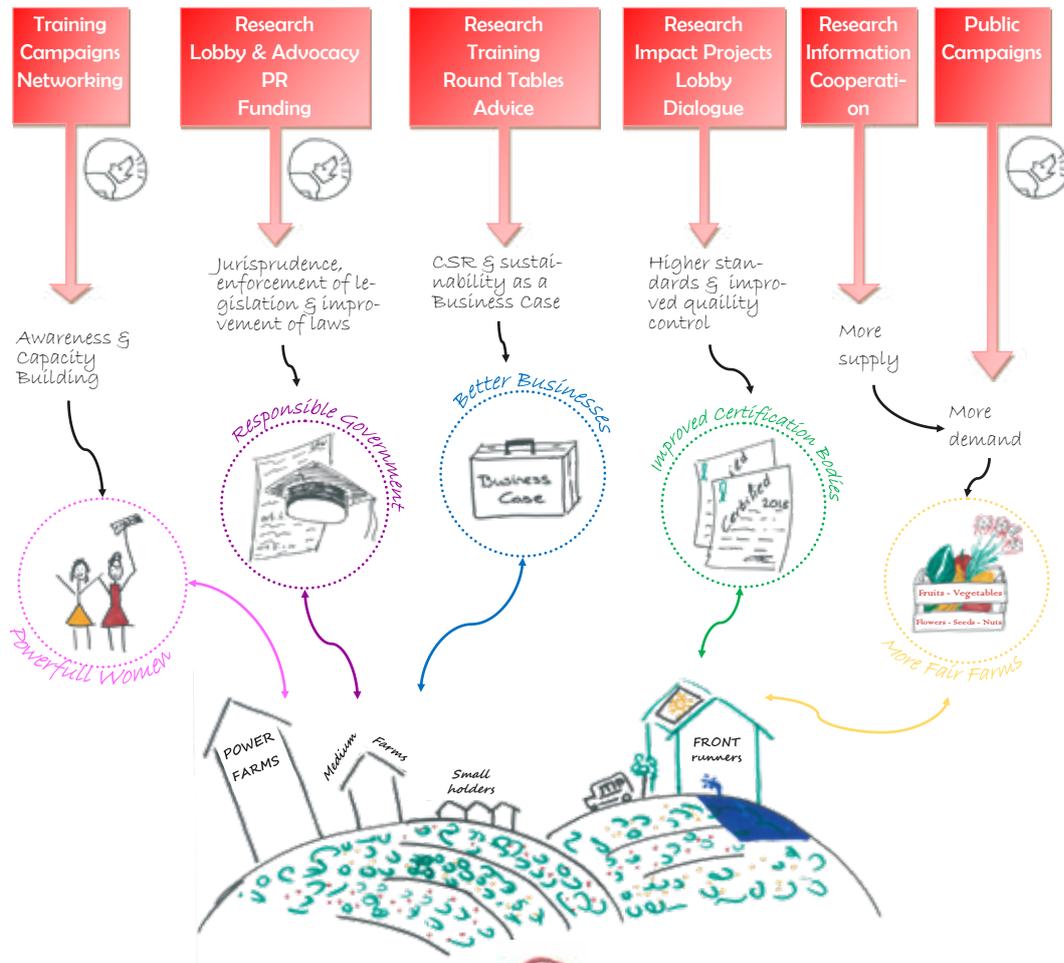
of change towards the desired change; or as a visualisation of vision, principles and key strategies. (See the examples in this chapter. They are not fully readable but their purpose here is to show different visual ways of presenting a ToC.)

However, in practice, the ToC visualisation often presents a diagram or flow-chart of the pathways of change, in a linear way. The result is a logic model that does not explain key elements. This carries the risk of losing – or at least not using – the diverse and rich information the ToC process provided and of pushing us back into linear thinking.

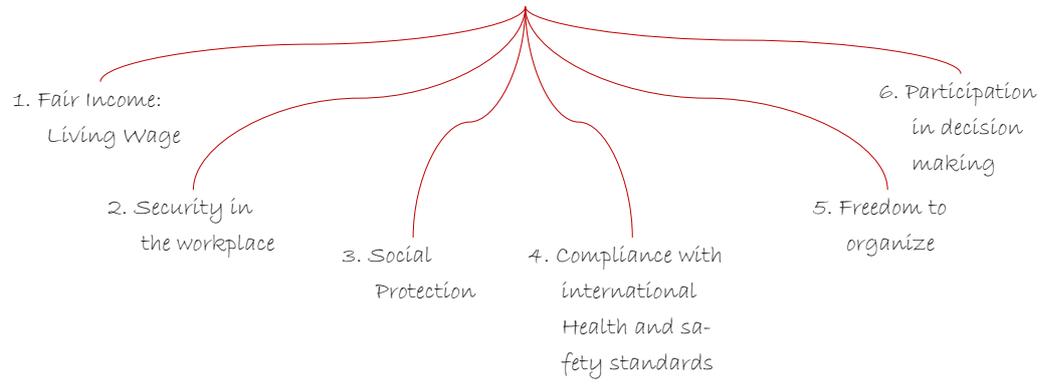
Visualisation has its limits. In practice, it is impossible to integrate all key elements of the ToC analysis or product into one visualisation. Sketches and symbols can be interpreted differently, making it hard for outsiders to understand the image. Visualising the ‘why’ and the ‘how’ of the ToC is difficult. Therefore, visualisations always need to be accompanied by narratives.

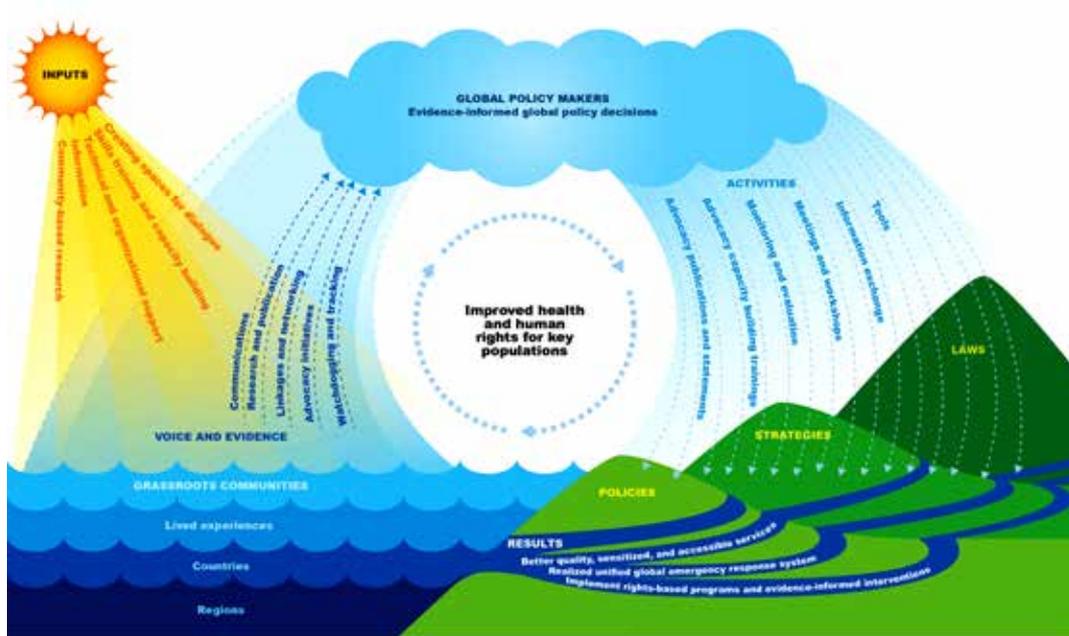
**EXAMPLES OF VISUALISATION OF A TOC PRODUCT**





## Decent Work for Women





Reproduced with kind permission from 'Why Advocacy Matters' by George Ayala: <http://www.msmgf.org/files/msmgf/documents/WhyAdvocacyMatters.pdf>



# 7 QUALITY AUDIT OF A TOC PROCESS AND PRODUCT



## PURPOSE OF A QUALITY AUDIT

A quality audit of an existing ToC involves a diagnosis of its quality according to the five principles as described in 4.1 'Principles for ToC practice'. A quality audit includes quality of content as well as process. The output of an audit will be a list of aspects that need to be improved, preferably with some indication about why and what kind of change might be needed. For example, an audit might show that the gender analysis is weak because it only looks at women in terms of practical interests and not of their strategic gender interests. So this already highlights what needs to be looked at specifically – strategic gender interests – when the ToC is actually improved.

Such an audit is useful in two situations.

In the first situation, **a draft ToC is submitted by a partner organisation to Hivos for funding or Hivos is submitting it to another agency for funding**. In either case, the ToC needs to be assessed before approval or submission. The submitting organisation or Hivos unit will then need to improve those parts found to be of limited quality. The main question to be answered by the audit in Situation 1 is 'Are the quality standards sufficiently covered, clear and underpinned with robust analysis?'

In the second situation, those involved in **an ongoing intervention** stop and review the quality of their ToC. A programme or project needs revising after a couple of years of initial implementation, when a new phase is anticipated or when there are strategic doubts or operational problems. If you use the ToC well, some of these problems would be dealt with

during implementation. Regular review and the MEL process should lead to ongoing improvements. But a structured, in-depth review may surface and address the more fundamental questions. In this second situation, if undertaken by the implementing staff, then the quality audit can lead to an improved ToC. The main question to be answered by the audit in Situation 2 is 'What has changed, what have we learned and what other new information do we have that requires us to rethink the ToC, its relevance and strategic choices?'

### **WHO IS INVOLVED IN A QUALITY AUDIT?**

To assess the quality of a ToC you need to have the information, expertise and legitimacy to do so. Assessing does not mean that you will also be able to do the improving. Those who assess and those who improve are not always the same people.

In Situation 1, Hivos staff will assess a proposal by partners or assess the ToC generated by other Hivos staff. The main question guiding this use of the audit is 'Is this ToC clear and does it meet the five quality standards?' Those who developed the draft ToC will be doing the improving. For example, Tender Support staff members will actively use the audit before Hivos submits a funding proposal to a donor. They can check the overall logic of the ToC through the eyes of an external reader, and to what extent assumptions are explicit and gender and power analysis have informed the proposal. They have less expertise and legitimacy to assess content, as they will rarely know the context in much detail. In theory, they could assess quality of the ToC development process, but as proposals follow donor formats, this will rarely be fully described.

An audit aims to improve quality of thinking, and not to critique people for sloppy thinking. Feedback is most constructive and likely to be taken seriously when it is offered as suggestions or questions about the existing ToC. A suggestion such as '*Please check if you have used the most recent national statistics on household poverty*' can be more effective than the comment '*Wrong data on household poverty!*'.

In Situation 2, the owners of the ToC will undertake the audit – you are reviewing your own ToC. The implementing team can invite partners and seek external support or additional input. The main question guiding this use of the audit is '*Is our analysis still correct?*'. In order to judge this, the team needs to be self-critical and therefore can benefit from having constructive outsiders involved to push their thinking further. The focus will be mainly on the content. But it can also include reviewing the quality of participation (has the ToC benefited from sufficient relevant input?) and the quality of use (is it being used optimally?).

## FOCUS AND OUTCOMES OF A QUALITY AUDIT

A ToC quality audit is nothing more – or less – than assessing the existing theory of change, both the narrative and its visual representation, in terms of how well it upholds the five principles of good quality ToC practice. The five quality principles described in Chapter 4 will structure the audit process and can be linked to the steps described in Chapter 5.

The outcome of the quality audit will depend on the initial reason for undertaking the audit. It can be focused or encompass all principles and steps.

**Option 1. Focused audit.** You might know where the problem lies – for example, collaboration with a specific actor does not work out as expected or you know that there was limited gender analysis informing the ToC. You can structure a quality audit by working through one or several steps discussed in Chapter 5 that pertain to that problem. If you need a more gender-informed perspective, several steps would need to be revised but only focusing on that dimension. This would be a focused use of an audit and would lead to suggestions about where improvements are needed.

**Option 2. Full audit.** A full audit is more appropriate when the initiative has not been reviewed for a long time, or when it concerns a proposal being submitted for funding. In this case, all principles and all steps are looked at and suggestions for improvement can relate to any aspect of the ToC process or content.

Whether comprehensive or focused, undertaking a quality audit should enable you to identify inconsistencies, gaps and weaknesses in order to sharpen the strategies, make implicit assumptions explicit, and improve the overall quality of thinking that guides operational decisions. If undertaken with a group of stakeholders, an audit will involve discussing the context and updating yourselves on critical changes, as well as sharing experiences of what has worked well and not so well (yet).

This reflection can then feed into the actual revisions about how the ToC needs to be improved: additions, changes, and deletions. In Situation 1, the areas for improvement are fed back to the team that developed the proposal. In Situation 2, the improvements can flow immediately from the diagnosis.

A ToC Quality audit requires asking the questions outlined in Steps 2 to 7 differently and asking a few other questions. Table 5 sets out the core questions for a quality audit and is followed by more specific questions for each of the five principles for two situations: (1) when assessing the quality of a draft proposal, including the underlying ToC; and (2) when reviewing an existing project, including the underlying ToC.

**TABLE 5: FOCUS QUESTIONS FOR A TOC QUALITY AUDIT**

QUALITY PRINCIPLE	CORE QUESTION FOR SITUATION 1: DRAFT TOC	CORE QUESTION FOR SITUATION 2: TOC-IN-USE
Comprehensive analysis of context, actors, and strategic options	Is the focus and strategy described in the ToC narrative (and visual) based on up-to-date and comprehensive information about the context and stakeholders?	Is the focus and strategy described in the ToC narrative (and visual) still up-to-date and comprehensive?
Clear power and gender analysis about 'how change happens' and the forces at play that help/hinder	Does an explicit power and gender perspective inform the vision, objectives, strategic options, values and assumptions in the ToC narrative (and visual)?	Is the power and gender perspective in the vision, objectives, strategic options, values and assumptions in the ToC narrative (and visual) still relevant and sufficiently detailed to guide implementation?
Explicit underlying assumptions and values	Does the ToC narrative (and visual) specify useful and critical underlying assumptions, and are the values that inform the choices in the ToC explicit?	Do we need to revise the key assumptions on which our work is based, and do we clearly uphold the values that inform our strategic choices in the ToC?
Active participation of relevant groups of people in ToC development	Does the ToC narrative make clear that relevant people were meaningfully involved in informing the vision, strategies and context analysis of the ToC?	Were the key relevant people involved meaningfully in informing the vision, strategies and context analysis? Who might need to be involved to update it?
Active and regular use by relevant people to guide implementation and MEL processes.	Does the ToC make clear how the ToC will be used and who will use it to guide implementation, whether management and/or MEL staff?	Has the ToC been used to guide implementation? If not, why not and what needs to change to make this possible?

**PRINCIPLE 1. IS ANALYSIS COMPREHENSIVE ENOUGH IN TERMS OF CONTEXT, ACTORS, AND STRATEGIC OPTIONS?**

This principle requires looking at the same kinds of issues as discussed in Steps 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6. However, rather than asking, for example, 'What is the desired change?' the question becomes 'Is the desired change described clearly and representing the vision for change?'. In Situation 1, the assessment will be about whether it is clear and comprehensive. In Situation 2, the audit process will check whether the desired change is up-to-date and still relevant.

In Table 6, for each step the original focus and core question is followed by questions for the purpose of a quality audit.

**TABLE 6. QUESTIONS TO GUIDE QUALITY AUDIT OF PRINCIPLE 1**

STEP AND FOCUS	SITUATION 1. ASSESSING A DRAFT TOC UNDERPINNING A PROPOSAL	SITUATION 2. REVIEWING A TOC-IN-USE
<p>Step 2. Desired change. What is the desired change, why and for whom?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is the desired of change statement clear and detailed enough?</li> <li>• Is the relevance of the desired change for the people whose lives are meant to improve supported by evidence?</li> <li>• Are the people whose lives are meant to improve described clearly and specified for gender?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is the desired of change statement still genuinely representing the vision?</li> <li>• Is the desired change still relevant for the people whose lives are meant to improve?</li> <li>• Are the people whose lives are meant to improve still a critical group to benefit and are they clearly specified, including for gender?</li> </ul>
<p>Step 3. Analyse current situation. What is the current situation in relation to the issue(s) we wish to change?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is there clear evidence of a rigorous analysis of social, political, economic, cultural, ecological, and geographical factors in terms of how they influence the issue that the desired change seeks to address?</li> <li>• Is there a thorough discussion of the roles and interests of the key actors, going beyond the usual suspects, and how they influence or could contribute to or hold back the desired change?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What might have changed in the context or with any of the stakeholders' interests or capacities that requires adapting the ToC narrative and visual? Consider social, political, economic, cultural, ecological, and geographical factors.</li> <li>• Are there any new opportunities for change or are initial opportunities no longer an option?</li> </ul>
<p>Step 4. Identify domains of change. Who and what needs to change, where and in which way, for the desired change to become possible? Who needs to do what differently?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Does the ToC narrative reflect a solid consideration of the range of different aspects that need to change in order to make the desired change possible: relationships, capabilities, values, attitudes, behaviours, formal and informal institutions?</li> <li>• Is there a clear and well-argued identification of key domains of change?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What might have changed in the context or with any of the stakeholders that requires rethinking: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o the domains of change and</li> <li>o who needs to do what differently to make the desired change possible?</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<p>Step 5. Identify strategic priorities. What changes can Hivos best influence, why and how, in the next 3 - 5 years?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is the analysis underpinning the selection of the strategic priorities clear and convincing?</li> <li>• Is the selection of strategic priorities realistic in view of the identified time frame?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What do our experiences to date tell us about the need for adjustment of strategic priorities and of the strategies themselves?</li> </ul>

**TABLE 6. QUESTIONS TO GUIDE QUALITY AUDIT OF PRINCIPLE 1**

STEP AND FOCUS	SITUATION 1. ASSESSING A DRAFT TOC UNDERPINNING A PROPOSAL	SITUATION 2. REVIEWING A TOC-IN-USE
<p>Step 6. Mapping Change Pathways. How do we think the change process may look? What needs to happen before the next positive step in the process can take place?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is there a clear and sufficiently detailed set of change pathways that logically link the desired change via strategic priorities to the specific actions that Hivos will support?</li> <li>• Are actors named clearly and their expected behaviour change made explicit at different levels of the change pathways?</li> <li>• Are possible unintended results considered sufficiently in the causal pathways?</li> </ul>	<p>Think about what has been working well and not so well (yet).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Where do we need to adjust the change pathways to better reflect how we now understand change to actually happen?</li> <li>• Where can we see something missing, something that needs adjusting or something that seems unnecessary or no longer relevant?</li> </ul>
<p>Step 7. Define MEL priorities and process. What information do we need to track and analyse progress, and to learn about assumptions for improvement</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is it clear what information is considered critical to keep on track and learn from implementation?</li> <li>• Is it clear how the information will be used and by who in order to improve implementation as well as the ToC, and to show progress?</li> </ul>	<p>Are we obtaining, analysing and using the information that we considered critical as planned? If not, what is going wrong and where are the main opportunities for improving the MEL process?</p>

**PRINCIPLE 2. ARE POWER AND GENDER CONSIDERATIONS EXPLICIT IN THE ANALYSIS?**

Checking whether this principle has been considered sufficiently means looking at whether power and gender perspectives have clearly and thoroughly informed the analysis of context, stakeholders, values and strategies. If the ToC is weak in its reference to power or gender inequalities and strategies for redressing them, then suggestions are needed on how to strengthen a ToC using power and gender perspectives.

*When assessing a draft ToC*, the main questions about inclusion of a **power** perspective are:

- a. Is the desired change and context/problem analysis based on an explicit and convincing understanding of underlying power inequalities?
- b. Are the chosen strategies explicit about which power inequalities are to be shifted, and why? Then it should be possible to assess whether it is within the scope of Hivos’ or the partner’s mission.
- c. Is the analysis justifying the choice of strategies sufficiently convincing that they are realistic about how power inequalities are to be shifted?

*Similarly*, the main questions about inclusion of a **gender** perspective are:

- a. Is the desired change and context/problem analysis based on an explicit and convincing understanding of underlying gender dynamics and inequalities?
- b. Are the chosen strategies explicit about which aspects of gender inequalities are to be shifted, and why? Then it should be possible to assess whether it is within the scope of Hivos’ or the partner’s mission.

- c. Is the analysis justifying the choice of strategies sufficiently convincing that they are realistic about how gender inequalities are to be shifted? Is it clear how they will benefit the groups living with these inequalities in ways that are relevant and significant for them?
- d. Are the people directly and indirectly targeted by the initiative specified in terms of gender?

**When reviewing a ToC-in-use**, reflect on the lessons from implementation to date in answering the questions about the quality of the power and gender perspective and in deciding which parts of the ToC require adjustment.

The main questions about inclusion of a **power** perspective are:

- a) Is the desired change and context/problem analysis still accurate in its understanding of underlying power inequalities?
- b) Are the chosen strategies still relevant and politically well-informed about which power inequalities are to be shifted, and why?
- c) Are the chosen strategies still relevant and realistic about how power inequalities are to be shifted?

Similarly, the main questions about inclusion of a **gender** perspective are:

- a) Is the desired change and context/problem analysis still accurate in its understanding of underlying gender dynamics and inequalities?
- b) Are the chosen strategies still relevant and politically well-informed about which aspects of gender inequalities are to be shifted, and why?
- c) Are the chosen strategies still relevant and realistic about how gender inequalities are to be shifted? Is it clear how they will benefit the groups living with these inequalities in ways that are relevant and significant for them?

### **PRINCIPLE 3. ARE THE ASSUMPTIONS COMPREHENSIVE AND CLEARLY FORMULATED?**

A ToC is based on a series of assumptions underlying our thinking about change. These assumptions must be made explicit in order to validate them, and for us to learn and adjust our practice accordingly. Therefore, assumptions should be explicit and reflect thoughtful consideration. The ToC narrative should include assumptions about the context and actors/factors influencing the situation to be changed, the pathways of change, the context and implementation aspects. See section 3.2 for more ideas about the kinds of questions to ask. Each step in Chapter 5 also includes assumptions that matter.

**When assessing a draft ToC**, the main question is:

- Does the ToC narrative (and visual) clearly include a thoughtful and comprehensive specification of the key assumptions?

**When reviewing a ToC-in-use**, the main question is:

- What have we learned about the work that means some assumptions might need to be added, changed or simply dropped?

### **PRINCIPLE 4. HAS THE TOC BEEN DEVELOPED WITH ENOUGH OF THE RIGHT PEOPLE?**

This principle is about ensuring that the vision is not just developed by a few people behind their desks but has been informed with involvement of the people who are supposed to benefit and those who are supposed to help implement the initiative.

**When assessing a draft ToC**, the main questions are:

- Does the ToC narrative make clear who was involved in which way to inform the document?
- Is the choice of people sufficiently justified in terms of stake, expertise and generating ownership of the proposal – and were they involved meaningfully?

**When reviewing a ToC-in-use**, the main question is:

- Whose opinions and experiences are informing or should be influencing the revision of the ToC – the desired change, strategic priorities, causal pathway, gender and power analyses? Are they being included in the process? If they are different from the people involved in the initial phase, why is that the case?

## **PRINCIPLE 5. IS THE TOC BEING USED ACTIVELY BY THE RELEVANT PEOPLE TO GUIDE IMPLEMENTATION AND MEL PROCESSES?**

This last principle is included to ensure that a ToC is a living product and guides the work, and is adapted and updated during implementation.

**When assessing a draft ToC**, the main question is:

- Does the ToC narrative make clear how it will be used and by who to track and analyse information in order to learn about and improve implementation?

**When reviewing a ToC-in-use**, the main questions are:

- Is there clear evidence that we are using the ToC to reflect, learn and improve our work? If not, why not? How are we going to improve that in the next phase?
- Thinking about what we have learned about what works well and not so well (yet), what information do we need to track and analyse about the ToC now in order to keep learning and improving? What does that mean for the adaptation of the MEL priorities and processes?

## **KNOWING WHEN A TOC IS 'GOOD ENOUGH'**

A tricky aspect of undertaking a quality audit is knowing when 'good enough' analysis has been undertaken. One person might feel that power has received enough attention, while another is sure that this requires another round of evidence and discussion. Accepting when to stop will also depend on the time, money and capacities that are available for the ToC audit. Thus, what might not be perfect might be all that is feasible in the situation in which you, your colleagues or the partner organisations are working.

Table 7 shows what the difference between a weak and a robust ToC would look like in the form of a 'rubrics'. Using rubrics allows you to make judgements about quality that are explicit and transparent for everyone involved. Rubrics always include the aspects of performance on which you are focusing (what you are assessing). A rubric shows which performance levels exist and what each level looks like in practice.

Examining ToC quality, the aspects of performance are the five quality criteria and fulfilling these will lead to ToCs that are 'weak', 'have potential', are 'reasonable' or are 'robust'.

Using these rubrics, either as a quick scan or for a more in-depth assessment using the questions in this chapter, can show that specific aspects of a ToC are weak. For example, the analysis might be comprehensive with solid power and gender lenses used leading to a 'robust' verdict, but the assumptions are nowhere to be found or are superficial and few, which leads to a 'weak' grading. This assessment then gives the people involved very clear feedback about what it is they can usefully focus on.

**TABLE 7: TOC QUALITY AUDIT RUBRICS**

PRINCIPLES	WEAK	HAS POTENTIAL	REASONABLE	ROBUST
Comprehensive analysis	Superficial, uncritical, business as usual	Some new thinking, with big gaps in critical thinking	Critical thought on most areas, unclear in some areas, mainly based on known strategies	Critical, clear, focused, considers wide range of perspectives, information and strategies
Power and gender aware	No thought on power or gender dynamics	Weak and/or partial power or gender analysis	Power and gender lens used but some areas or implications still underdeveloped	Power and gender lenses clearly inform analysis and strategies
Articulated assumptions	None except most basic/obvious	Some but not systematic, clear or critical	Fairly complete but not all well formulated	Clear, comprehensive, critical ones identified
Participation	Very few people involved ad hoc in formulation or review	Intentional inclusion of some players in formulation or review	Clear process for diverse input planned with wide participation in some aspects but not fully realised	Clear process implemented with critical input from diverse relevant players
Active use	Collecting dust	Used infrequently, on request	Some proactive use but not updated	Frequent use and updating

**PART C**

**RESOURCES  
AND TOOLS**

# 8 KEY TOOLS, RESOURCES AND MATERIALS

## 8.1 TOOLS REFERRED TO IN THESE GUIDELINES

### RICH PICTURE

Rich Pictures are recommended in Step 2 'Describe the desired change' and in Step 3 'Describe the current situation'. Detailed instructions are provided in Step 3 and can be found at <http://www.managingforimpact.org/tool/rich-picture-0>.

**Developing a Rich Picture** together is a way to learn about complex or ill-defined problems by drawing detailed ('rich') representations of them. Rich pictures usually consist of symbols, sketches or doodles and can contain as much pictorial information as is deemed necessary. The main value of this technique is the way it induces the creator(s) to think deeply about the problem by opening discussion, including different perspectives, with one image triggering ideas about what else is needed. The finished picture may also be of value to other stakeholders not involved in generating it, since it captures many different facets of the situation and can provide a focus for taking the discussion on driving factors and actors further.

Rich Pictures are a part of the understanding process, not just a way of recording what you know of a given situation or creating a work of art. A Rich Picture includes both tangible aspects of a given situation as well as underlying forces and processes. If done well, a Rich Picture does not privilege, predetermine, or presume a particular point of view.

Rich Pictures are different from **Mind maps**. A Mind map<sup>5</sup> tends to be text-based and more structured. The two tools serve different purposes.

### AN ALTERNATIVE USE OF THE RICH PICTURE TECHNIQUE

An alternative use of the Rich Picture is to combine Steps 2 and 3 by drawing one picture that represents both the current situation and the desired change, a "Before and After". This kind of Rich Picture emerges as a result of visualising the present and, after analysing current reality, projecting an image of the future that shows the desired changes. The picture has two parts: a reflection of the present and a visualisation of the future after the desired change has happened.

All the elements of context, actors, key issues, gender, power, formal and informal institutions, relationships, behaviours, and capacities should be analysed and represented, as described under Step 3. The Rich picture can then be used in the subsequent steps to explore what is needed for the current situation to evolve towards the desired situation.

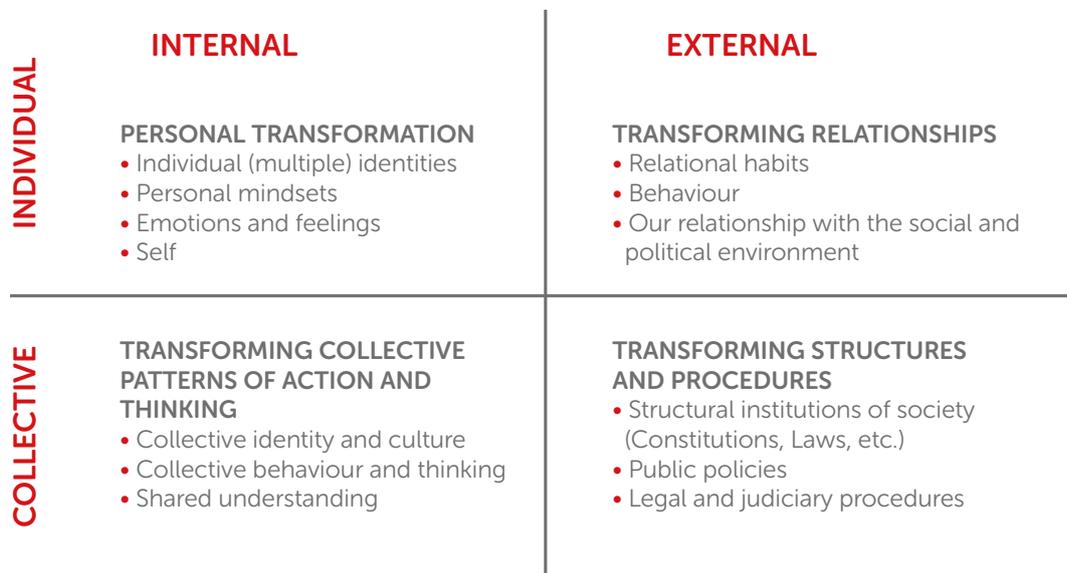
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<sup>5</sup> For more information: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mind\\_map](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mind_map).

## FOUR DIMENSIONS OF CHANGE

The Four Dimensions of Change framework can be used in Step 2 (Desired Change), Step 3 (Current Situation), Step 5 (Strategic priorities) and Step 6 (Map Change Pathways, including strategic options).

The Four Dimensions of Change framework allows a detailed exploration of the different types of change needed, how they are connected or related, and the strategies that come with them. In most change processes, change in all four dimensions is needed but often people are familiar with one or two, or have a clear personal preference. Thinking of other options and dimensions of change does not always come naturally. The framework helps to open up the conversation between participants in a ToC process about their different perspectives to change.



**Figure 12:**  
Four Dimensions of Change

Adapted from Wilber (1996) by Keystone (2008), Retolaza (2010, 2012)

Each dimension or quadrant refers to a specific 'type' of social change:

- Individual or personal transformation, or transformation of 'self';
- Transformation of relationships between individuals, groups of people, relationships in society;
- Transformation of cultural patterns, norms, collective beliefs and thinking;
- Transformation of structures and institutions.

In Step 2, this tool is very effective at helping people make explicit and reflect on their personal preferences with respect to how social change happens and the strategies we believe are crucial. For example, some people will automatically think of changing policies and laws, while others will always start with awareness-raising and personal change. Sharing these personal preferences with others and exploring the underlying thinking can help to bring out personal theories of change. It provokes discussion on the implications of addressing each dimension but also on how they interact – simultaneously and as a sequence for a given situation.

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## BOX 24: HOW TO INTRODUCE THE DIMENSIONS OF CHANGE FRAMEWORK

One way to use the Dimensions of Change is to assign each dimension to a specific corner of the room and ask group members to stand in the corner that relates to their preference. They are not allowed to stand in the middle – they have to choose.

This can be done as a general, introductory exercise by asking: 'Which dimension of change do you feel is most important or most effective for achieving lasting social change?' Or it can be related to the issue at hand by asking: 'Which dimension comes to mind first, as being important for this issue or problem?'

Then, the facilitator asks several people from each group to explain their choice, starting with the smallest group. After a first round, other people can add additional justifications for their preference, if these have not yet been mentioned. This kind of discussion surfaces a broad range of perspectives about change and change strategies. The facilitator can also ask participants to add an example from their experience to illustrate their choice.

A follow-up step can be to do a second round in which participants can change corners if they want to and have them explain the reasons for changing.

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1. In Step 2, the framework is used to explore and specify the Desired Change further by asking: *'Which quadrant or combination of quadrants is particularly important for the desired change? Why?'*
2. In Step 3, the framework can be used to deepen the analysis of the Current Situation. Questions that can be asked:
  - How do the dimensions/quadrants relate to the change needed? Where is or are the biggest bottlenecks? Why?
  - For each dimension, do you think of specific stakeholders or other actors and their behaviour or their role in the status quo - or in the envisaged change process? Why?
  - In which dimension(s) is change more feasible to occur? Why?
  - In which dimension(s), is change more difficult to trigger? Why?
3. In Steps 5 and 6, the outcomes of the conversation in Step 2 and/or 3 can be used to explore the strategic priorities and options. Questions that can be asked:
  - Which dimension(s) offer the biggest opportunities for change? Why?
  - Which dimension(s) offer the biggest opportunities for us to make a difference? Why?
  - Is change in one or a combination of dimensions conditional for achieving our objectives? Why? What does that mean for our strategic choices?

## CELEBRATING SUCCESS

These exercises help explore and specify the Desired Change in Step 2 and come to more clarity about what the changed situation would look like and people's vision of success.

### THE TIME MACHINE OR HELICOPTER

Imagine that you could travel forward in time and that you are flying over the area where your initiative was focused. What can you see that is different? Would this be, for example:

- different uses of land;
- different buildings, waterways, crops, infrastructure;
- different activities and who is involved in them;
- different behaviour, from whom, and how would it show?
- different relationships
- who is walking around who wasn't before?
- different emotional states of people in that situation?

### THE PARTY

The Party version of this exercise uses the idea of a celebration onto which to project images of changes. Take, for example, the idea of a 10th anniversary of the project or initiative, or an award ceremony. The guiding question would be *'Which changes are you celebrating, and for whom?'*

### THE CONFERENCE

This is another way of encouraging this kind of thinking. Imagine you are at a conference where stakeholders of the initiative are presenting successes of the work. Who would be standing up and sharing? What specific successes would they share?

# STAKEHOLDER AND ACTOR ANALYSIS

Stakeholder or actor analysis takes place in Step 3, 'Describe the current situation'.

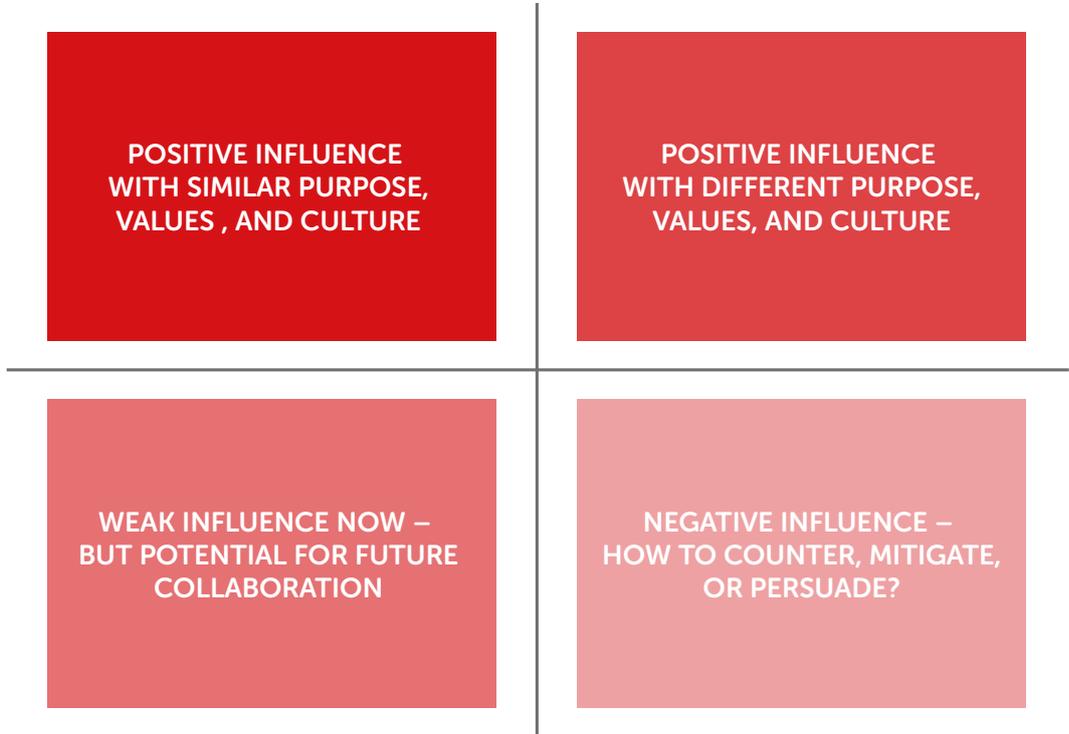
The terms 'stakeholder analysis' and 'actor analysis' are often used interchangeably. However, not all actors who are important for the desired change to become possible are necessarily stakeholders in the process, and might not consider themselves to be a stakeholder. See also 1.3 Use of this Guide.

An actor and stakeholder analysis aims to identify the **role** that critical actors play in causing, maintaining or (potentially) transforming the situation that needs changing; the **power and influence** they have to do so; and the **interest** they have in changing it.

Many tools for stakeholder and actor analysis exist:

- <http://www.odi.org/publications/5257-stakeholder-analysis>
- <http://www.odi.org/publications/156-tools-policy-impact-handbook-researchers> (includes explanation of other relevant tools, such as Force Field Analysis)
- <http://www.odi.org/publications/153-tools-knowledge-learning-guide-development-humanitarian-organisations> (includes Social Network Analysis and more)

The following easy to use matrix (see Figure 13) can help analyse the influence of actors. It can stimulate discussion on the actual and potential role of actors in the issue at hand and in the envisaged change process.



**Figure 13:** Actor & Influence matrix

The matrix is drawn on a large flipchart, with the four quadrants indicated by a key word in the corner (positive/same, positive/different, weak/potential, negative). Each of the quadrants is explained so participants are clear on their meaning. In groups of 4-6, participants write as many actors and stakeholders as they can think of on post-its and stick them in one of the four quadrants. When they place the post-its, they discuss their role, influence and why they feel they should be there. If there is more than one group doing the exercise, results can be compared and integrated to one picture afterwards.

After the brainstorm, the group can discuss:

- Have we overlooked certain actors, e.g. when some quadrants are rather empty? If so, why is that the case? Supplement (if relevant).
- What do we know about the role, interests and capacities of those actors? Should we investigate some of them further?
- What are the relationships between the initiators and/or the people who should benefit from the intended change process and the actors in the different quadrants?
- What assumptions are we making about the actors in the quadrants?
- If we have already identified possible strategic options (Step 5), does our analysis mean we need to rethink them, can we make sharper choices?

In general, people tend to focus their thinking about strategies and collaboration on like-minded actors and organisations in the upper left quadrant. Sometimes, the obvious 'opponents' (bottom right quadrant) are also identified. But the other two quadrants may offer interesting options to diversify strategies.

## POWER ANALYSIS

Step 3 requires an analysis of power. Power analysis is at the core of ToC thinking: if we aim to shift power relations in a specific situation we need to know how power is distributed, which forms of power and power dynamics are at play, and how the people we want to benefit are embedded in and affected by them. Power and gender perspectives need to clearly and thoroughly inform the analysis of context, stakeholders, values and strategies.

Two frameworks for power analysis that have proven to be effective tools of thought are:

- 'Expressions of Power' by VeneKlasen and Miller, distinguishing between: Power Over, Power With, Power To and Power Within; and
- 'Power Cube', developed by IDS.

These frameworks can be used separately or in combination. 'Expressions of Power' (1) can be used to identify and map the power dynamics at play in the situation. The 'Power Cube' (2) can then be used to further explore the concepts and their interrelations in different spaces.

*'Making Change Happen: Power. Concepts for Revisioning Power for Justice, Equality and Peace'* (Just Associates 2006, 2011) describes how both power analyses can be brought together and potential strategies identified. On page 13 of that publication you find a Power Matrix to that effect. This matrix presents how different dimensions of power interact to shape the problem and the possibility of citizen participation and action.

Link to the document: <http://www.justassociates.org/en/resources/mch3-power-concepts-revisioning-power-justice-equality-and-peace>.

### 1. EXPRESSIONS OF POWER<sup>6</sup>

#### Power Over

The most commonly recognized form of power, *power over*, has many negative associations for people, such as repression, force, coercion, discrimination, corruption, and abuse. Power is seen as a win-lose kind of relationship.

#### Power With

*Power with* has to do with finding common ground among different interests and building collective strength. Based on mutual support, solidarity and collaboration, power with multiplies individual talents and knowledge. Power with can help build bridges across different interests to transform or reduce social conflict and promote equitable relations.

#### Power To

*Power to* refers to the unique potential of every person to shape his or her life and world. When based on mutual support, it opens up the possibilities of joint action, or power with.

#### Power Within

*Power within* has to do with a person's sense of self-worth and self-knowledge; it includes an ability to recognize individual differences while respecting others. Power within is the capacity to imagine and have hope; it affirms the common human search for dignity and fulfilment.

See also: <http://www.justassociates.org/en/resources/new-weave-power-people-politics-action-guide-advocacy-and-citizen-participation>.

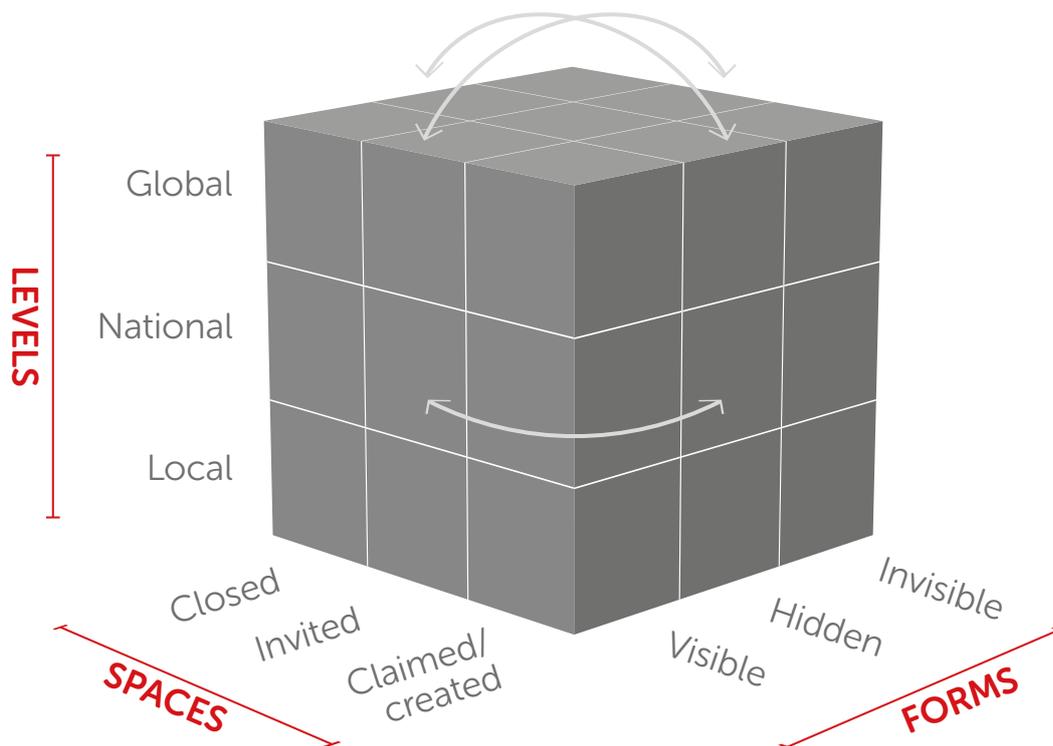
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<sup>6</sup> From: 'A new Weave of Power, People & Politics' - Lisa VeneKlasen and Valerie Miller, 2002

## 2. THE POWER CUBE

(from [www.powercube.net](http://www.powercube.net))

The Power Cube is a three dimensional framework for analysing the *levels, spaces and forms of power*, and their inter-relationship. It helps participants to explore various aspects of power and how they interact with each other. It visually maps actors (including those implementing the initiative), relationships and forces. The mapping helps to consider possibilities for movement, mobilisation and change, and therefore entry points for action.



The **FORMS** dimension refers to the ways in which power manifests itself, including its visible, hidden and invisible forms.

### **Visible power: observable decision-making**

This level includes the visible and definable aspects of political power – the formal rules, structures, authorities, institutions and procedures of decision-making.

### **Hidden power: setting the political agenda**

Certain powerful people and institutions maintain their influence by controlling who sits at the decision-making table and what gets on the agenda. These dynamics operate on many levels to exclude and devalue the concerns and representation of less powerful groups.

### **Invisible power: shaping meaning and what is acceptable**

Probably the most insidious of the three dimensions of power, invisible power shapes the psychological and ideological boundaries of participation. By influencing how individuals

think about their place in the world, this level of power shapes people's beliefs, sense of self and acceptance of the status quo – even their own superiority or inferiority. Processes of socialisation, culture and ideology perpetuate exclusion and inequality by defining what is normal, acceptable and safe.

The **SPACES** dimension of the cube refers to the potential arenas for participation and action, including closed, invited and claimed spaces.

### ***Closed spaces***

Closed spaces are spaces where elites such as politicians, bureaucrats, experts, bosses, managers and leaders make decisions behind closed doors, without any pretence of broadening the boundaries for inclusion.

### ***Invited spaces***

In many societies and governments, demands for participation have created new opportunities for involvement and consultation, usually through 'invitation' from various authorities, be they government, supra-national agencies or non-governmental organizations. Invited spaces may be institutionalized and ongoing, such as legally constituted participatory fora, or be one-off consultations.

### ***Claimed spaces***

While much emphasis on citizen action and participation is on how to open up closed spaces, or to participate effectively with authorities in invited spaces, there are almost always examples in any society of spaces for participation which relatively powerless or excluded groups create for themselves. These spaces range from ones created by social movements and community associations, to those simply involving natural places where people gather to debate, discuss and resist, outside of the institutionalized policy arenas.

The **LEVELS** dimension of the cube refers to the differing layers of decision-making and authority held on a vertical scale, including the local, national and global. In each situation, there will a different set of layers or levels that are important for the power analysis.

### **Other resources for power analysis can be found at:**

- POLITICAL ECONOMY ANALYSIS  
<http://www.gsdrc.org/go/topic-guides/political-economy-analysis>
- Tools for Analysing Power in Multi-stakeholder Processes - A menu  
<http://www.mspguide.org/resource/tools-analysing-power-multi-stakeholder-processes-menu>

## GENDER ANALYSIS

In all steps, gender analysis is of great importance to ensure that the initiative contributes effectively to greater gender equality and to prevent interventions from having unintended negative effects on the situation or position of women and girls.

In Step 3, gender analysis is essential for describing the current situation in terms of the position of women and girls and the gender relations in the local context, and more specifically related to the problem and envisaged change. Aspects that need considering during Step 3 include:

- The status of women and their ability to exercise their human rights
- The gender division of labour and workload of women
- Access to and control over resources of women as compared to men (including mobility)
- Influence of women in decision-making at household, community and society levels (as compared to men)
- Self-determination of women over their body, reproduction and sexuality
- Social beliefs and norms about gender roles, what women and men should and should not do and be, and images of women in society
- Violence against women
- Organisational capacity of women and representation of women's interests.

In order to analyse and monitor the gendered consequences of choices and decisions in the design stage of a programme or project, Hivos developed a list of key gender questions to be answered during the design and planning stage of a development intervention.

## HIVOS GENDER QUESTIONS

### 1. Problem analysis and mapping of the underlying Theory of Change

- How is the desired change formulated? How do women benefit from this change and is it significant for them?
- What does the outcome of the social, political, cultural and environmental context analysis mean in terms of what is needed to make this change beneficial to women?
- Is the contextual and stakeholder/actor analysis explicit about gender specific factors, actors and values?
- Are the assumptions about the causal relationships between actions and intended outcomes valid for women?
- Do the domains of change, strategic choices and intermediate outcomes constituting the pathway of change address the specific needs and interests of women, taking into account the gender division of access to and control over resources, workload, decision-making, notions of what women should or should not do and be?
- In view of the outcomes of the ToC analysis: are specific strategies needed to make the aspired change beneficial for women?

### 2. Objective

- What is the objective of the intervention?
- Is the objective as relevant for women as it is for men?
- If not, how can it be made of relevance for women, in view of Hivos' aim to contribute to greater equality outcomes between women and men? Reformulate the objective.

### 3. Target group and end beneficiaries

- Who is being targeted by the proposed intervention?
- Are the targeted group, participants, and end beneficiaries, defined explicitly in terms of gender?

### 4. Needs

- Are the needs of both women and men addressed through the proposed intervention?
- What specific women's needs are addressed? Are these made explicit?

### 5. Assumptions

- What assumptions are being made by the intervention about gender roles, and the gender division of access to and control over resources, workload and decision-making?
- What evidence is available that these assumptions are well informed?
- Are assumptions made gender-specific for women and men?

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#### Examples of assumptions that require further evidence

- Household access to biogas contributes to a reduction of women's workload
  - Improved rule of law guarantees improvement of the rights and position of women
  - Greater access to information contributes to women being better-informed and increased women's participation in decision-making
- 

### 6. Resources

- What resources are being made available through this intervention?
- (To what extent) Are women likely to have access to these resources, are women likely to manage them, and are women likely to control them?
- What specific programme strategies are included to enhance women's access to and decision-making power over resources?

### 7. Outcomes and benefits

- What are the outcomes - bearing in mind unintended outcomes - in the sense of benefits of this intervention?
- (To what extent) Are women likely to have access to, likely to manage and likely to control these benefits?
- What are the possible barriers for women - which specific categories of women - to participate and benefit from the intervention and are these barriers being addressed?
- What specific programme strategies are included to overcome barriers preventing women from benefitting from the intervention?
- What human and financial resources are needed?
- Are outcomes defined in gender-specific terms, with relevant gender-specific indicators?

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#### Examples of unintended outcomes

Unintended adverse effects for women and girls are extra workloads, withdrawal of contribution by men, unsafe and unhealthy work and travel conditions, increased school drop-out rate for girls, violence, corrective rape, etc.

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## 8. Strategic gender interests

- Does this intervention address women's strategic gender interests?
- What is the intervention's explicit potential to address women's strategic gender needs?

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### Strategic gender interests

Addressing strategic gender interests requires structural changes in order to achieve gender equality in society and to increase women's participation – in personal life, in the household and in society at large.

Structural changes include: changes in access to and control over resources; institutional changes such as laws; policies and resource allocation; changes in socio-cultural norms; beliefs and practices; changes in internalised attitudes; values and practices.

Structural changes and strategic interests require medium to long-term change processes and are about changes at the levels of outcomes and impact

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## LINKS TO GENDER RESOURCES

- **BRIDGE** (Gender and development research and information service based in the Gender and Sexuality Cluster at the Institute of Development Studies (IDS):  
<http://www.bridge.ids.ac.uk>
- **Gender at Work**: <http://www.gendratwork.org/>

## FRAMINGS

Framings can be used in Step 3 and 4, but are also a useful tool in other steps.

A 'framing' is a lens or a perspective through which you (or others) view the situation or an intervention. Using different framings can help expand fixed mind-sets. There is no right or wrong about perspectives, they are equally valid. However, if too rigid, then the options for change and strategic prioritisation can be limited to what people know and which might not be the best options.

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### An example of different framings<sup>7</sup>:

Depending on who you are, a Rolling Stones concert can be seen as:

- a fun evening out
  - an income generation activity
  - a form of cultural expression
  - a marketing product
  - nostalgia.
- 

<sup>7</sup> From: 'Wicked Solutions' - Bob Williams & Sjon van 't Hof, 2014.

Framings can be used in Step 3 (Current situation), but also in the other steps where it might help to take a different perspective to the topic you are discussing. How would someone look at this situation that is in a different position and has a different perspective on the desired change, on the relationships between actors, on the strategic options, on how change will become visible, or on the timeframe of the change process?

Ask yourselves:

- What framings might help in describing the current situation?
- What are the perspectives of different groups of stakeholders: how do they view the situation, and what do they think is needed and how it can be achieved?

The picture below illustrates how a pig might be viewed differently. How do the philosopher, the Muslim, the little girl, the butcher, the artist, the wolf, the farmer, and the veterinary view what a pig is and what it means to them? Consider the different ways in which they would answer the question 'what is the pig'?



## BEHAVIOUR CHANGE

Development is essentially about behaviour change, so this needs ongoing attention in all the steps of a ToC process.

In our thinking about change, we make many assumptions about how and why people change their behaviour. We do so especially in relation to commonly-used strategies such as capacity development, awareness-raising, and lobby and advocacy.

Many interventions are based on the basic ToC that if people are aware of a problem, have the necessary information, knowledge and skills (capacities) and are convinced they should do things differently (motivation), they will act accordingly and change their behaviour. Many strategies only focus on one of these aspects, such as capacities, and therefore may be ineffective. Furthermore, while it may work like that for some people in some situations, others may come to behaviour change differently.

Figure 14 and 15 illustrate the range of factors that may influence changes in behaviour. Usually, more than one factor needs to be triggered. In particular one factor is often forgotten in strategising for behaviour change: people need to have the opportunity to demonstrate changed behaviour.

**Opportunity** refers to the conditions and (dis)incentives in the context of people that help or hinder them to change their behaviour, for example:

- obligations or sanctions, formally and informally
- social norms and values, written and unwritten rules, social acceptance
- habits
- practical blockages
- acknowledgement and appreciation by (in)formal power holders vs. their appreciation and rewards for other aspects of behaviour
- competing priorities
- fear, bad previous experiences.

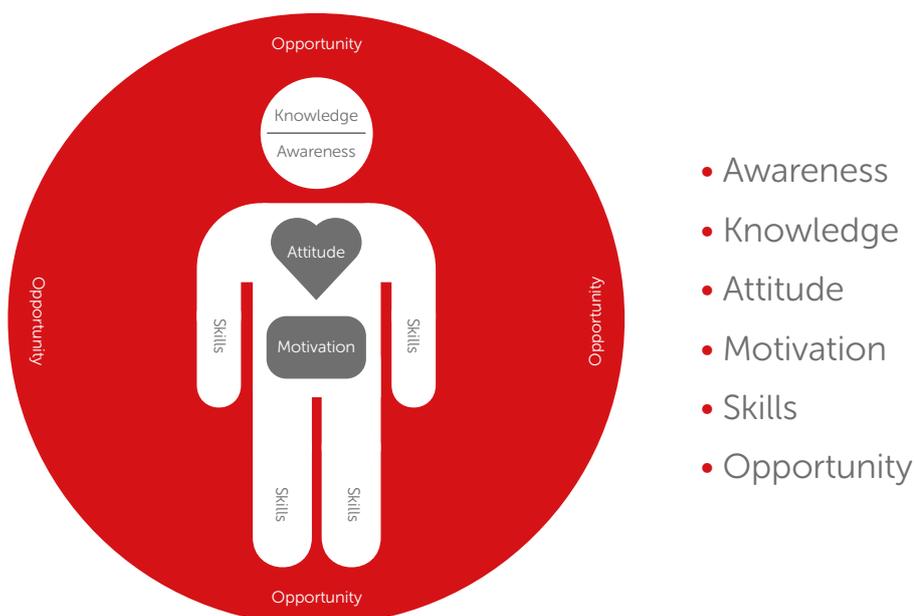


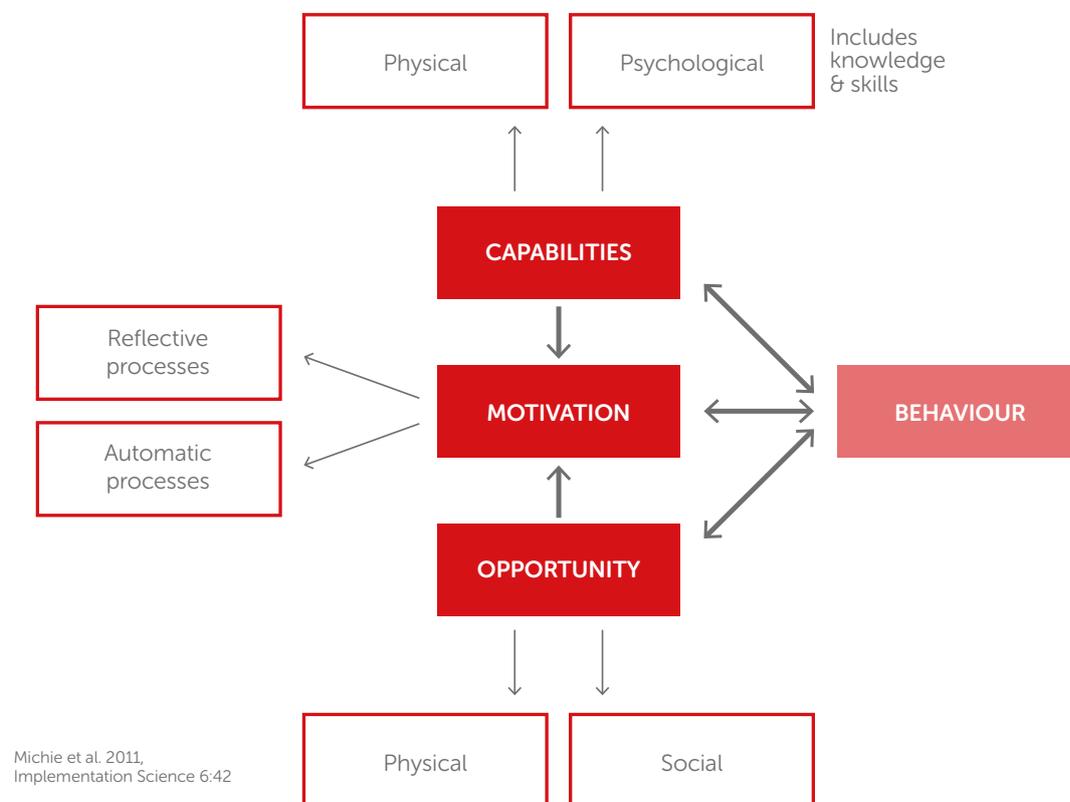
Figure 14

In all steps of the ToC process we need to ask ourselves questions such as:

- Which assumptions are we making about why people behave as they do?
- If we explore and choose strategies, why do we think people will change their behaviour as a response to the intervention? Are all the necessary conditions in place that will help or push them in the desired direction – and are they sufficient? If not, can we change or influence the conditions and incentives that are not favourable for behaviour change?
- If we propose to work on capacity development, are we sure that people are actually lacking information and capacities? Or are other reasons causing them to act as they do?

## WHAT FACTORS INFLUENCE BEHAVIOUR?

Figure 15



### Links to resources about behaviour change

- Resistance to Change?  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hcZ1aZ60k7w>
- <http://www.ucl.ac.uk/behaviour-change/resources>
- World Development Report 2015: Mind, Society and Behavior  
<http://www.worldbank.org/en/publication/wdr2015>

## RITUAL DISSENT

The main output of Step 5 is an agreement about strategic priorities. This requires first scanning options and then identifying which are likely to be both feasible and effective.

Ritual Dissent is a method designed to test and improve proposals or ideas by subjecting them to a ritualised form of dissent or assent. It is a forced listening technique, not a dialogue or discourse, which requires people to be very specific in their feedback to other people's ideas. It is used in Step 5 to support the development of robust strategic options.

Ritual Dissent is meant to simulate the process of delivering new ideas to management or decision-makers, and to open up new thinking to necessary criticism and iterations. The process is meant to enforce listening, without disruption. The scenario replicates real-life proposal making especially with regards to new and non-conventional ideas – as more experimental approaches are commonly met with the most challenges from management.

In outline, a group works on generating key ideas that are put to the test by sharing with others. A spokesperson presents the ideas from the group to another group who receives them in silence. The spokesperson then turns her/his chair, and listens in silence with her/his back to the group while the group either challenges the ideas presented (dissent) or provides alternative proposals (assent). The ritual of not facing the group giving feedback de-personalises the process. The group setting, with all groups experiencing the same kind of feedback, means that the attack or alternative are not personal but supportive. Listening in silence without eye contact increases the quality of listening.

Overall plans that emerge from the process are more resilient than from consensus-based discussion.

The technique is normally used in a workshop with a minimum of three groups with at least three participants in each. Ideally, the number of participants should be higher, but no higher than a dozen. The greater the number of groups, the more variety and iterations are possible.

Each group should be seated at a round table (or a circle of chairs), and the tables should be distributed in the work area to allow plenty of space between them. If the tables are very close then there will be too much noise, which will restrict the ability of the spokesperson to listen to the dissent/assent. The tables should be set up in such a way that it is easy to give an instruction to move to the next table in a clockwise or anti-clockwise fashion.

You may organise the subgroups to maximise diversity of response or have like-minded people sitting together. The first provides variety of criticism; the second can produce the greatest shock where entrenched thinking is at least a part of the problem.

### Procedure:

1. All groups work on their proposed strategic priorities and options to address them.
2. Each group is asked to select a spokesperson after they have been working for some time. It is necessary for the spokesperson to have *'a resilient and robust personality and not bear a grudge'*.
3. Explain exactly what is going to happen to the spokespersons. Advise the spokespersons that they will have three minutes to present the idea(s) of their subgroup to another subgroup. A time limit is set for the spokesperson to be ready to present (minimum 5 minutes).
4. At the deadline, ask the spokesperson from each group to stand up and to move to the next table in a clockwise direction and take the vacant seat, but to wait for your instruction before saying or doing anything.
5. Announce the instructions as follows. The spokesperson will present the ideas of their subgroup for 3 minutes facing the group. During the presentation time, the spokesperson presents to silence: the group may not comment or interact with the spokesperson in any way.
6. At 3 minutes a time check will be announced by the facilitator. At this point the spokesperson is asked to stop and to turn around to have their back to the group, finished or not.
7. When the spokesperson is facing away from them, the group attacks the ideas with full and complete vigour (dissent) or else come up with a better idea (assent). The idea here is not to be fair, reasonable or supportive, but to attack, or else to provide a better alternative. The spokesperson takes notes on what s/he hears.
8. After 15 minutes the facilitator indicates the end of this round. The spokesperson must not talk with the group but go back to their subgroups to talk about what they have learnt. The groups discuss the feedback and adapt or further develop their ideas. They then get ready for the next iteration, with another group in the room. The same spokesperson may go or another spokesperson may be selected.
9. For each cycle, reduce the time the group has for revisions. Their ideas become clearer so less time should be needed. Two or three rounds are good to increase learning, enable multiple perspectives to be taken into account and come to a clearer output.

### Links

- <http://cognitive-edge.com/methods/ritual-dissent/>
- <http://www.iaf-methods.org/node/14345>

# THREE SPHERES: CONTROL, INFLUENCE, INTEREST

The concept of the Three Spheres is used in Step 6 - Map change pathways, and in Step 7 - Define monitoring, evaluation and learning priorities and process. It comes from a method called Outcome Mapping, developed by the International Development and Research Centre (Canada).

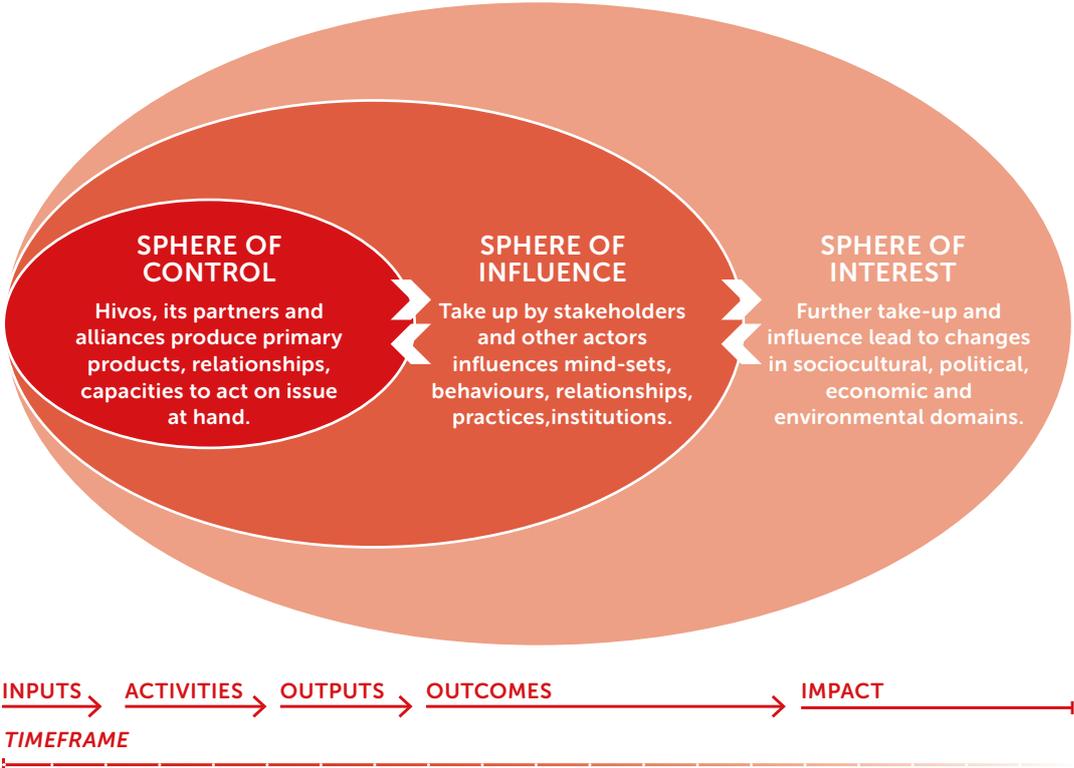
Links to information about Outcome Mapping:

- <http://www.idrc.ca/EN/Resources/Publications/Pages/IDRCBookDetails.aspx?PublicationID=121>
- Outcome Mapping Learning Community: <http://www.outcomemapping.ca/>

The concept of the Three Spheres provides a good basis to think about the extent of the project’s influence in the change process and on the achievement of its results.

The Three Spheres framework helps to support:

- a realistic formulation of envisaged results (realistic ambition and expectations)
- clarity about the question of attribution and contribution of results to the project’s activities
- the responsibility the project can and should take for the achievement of intended results
- a realistic planning of the process in time.



**Figure 9:** Three spheres: Control, Influence, Interest

Each sphere denotes different processes that are influenced by changes in the other spheres. Influences flow both ways through the three spheres.

1. The **Sphere of Control** refers to everything the project can control and is fully responsible for: the inputs, activities and direct results of those activities (outputs) as well as the quality of activities, products and engagement with stakeholders and other actors.
2. The **Sphere of Influence** refers to the reaction the project expects to see as a result of its activities: how stakeholders and other actors in the context use and/or respond to the outputs of the project.

Are the outputs taken up by the intended people? For example, is training being put into practice, or are farmers using market information? Do targeted actors change their behaviour and act differently? For example, do local authorities start consulting citizens in local planning processes, after being pushed to do so? Do teachers and parents come together to discuss measures to make a school a safer place for girls?

The Sphere of Influence is beyond the control of the project: you cannot control the actions of others. But you are still expected to influence their behaviour by the quality of your work. For example, the quality of your information and the nature of the relationships you facilitate between different actors can influence stakeholders to take up and use the project outputs effectively.

The Sphere of Influence encompasses a large part of the pathway(s) of change, or results chain: it is not one single result initiated by an output, but a whole 'chain' or web of them. It can be helpful to distinguish between Direct Influence and Indirect Influence. Direct influence is about results at outcome level that are closely related to the project's activities and come about in a relatively short timeframe. Some call them 'early outcomes' or 'immediate' outcomes.

Indirect influence is about responses to those earlier outcomes, farther beyond the influence of the project itself and higher up the results chain.

It is important to note that the results in the sphere of influence can be intended and unintended: responses to the project's outputs may be different than expected. Unexpected, and indeed unintended, results need close monitoring and reflection as they may be negative for stakeholders and/or for the success of the project. Strategies need to be adjusted accordingly.

3. The **Sphere of Interest** (sometimes called Sphere of Concern) is the sphere of lasting, structural change: changes in the lives of people and in conditions in society. It represents long term changes, beyond the control of any single actor or factor. In a ToC process, the desired change is often formulated at this level, or at the level of (indirect) outcomes.

### **Difference with Logframe**

The Three Spheres often map to the three results levels of the Logframe: outputs, outcomes and impact. The important difference is that the spheres can be used in a non-linear way. Each sphere can encompass a chain of results, with two-way flows of influence. This conceptualisation can be more useful than the Logframe in representing the real life change process.

The Three Spheres align with the project's theory of change in terms of time – from short term to longer term changes. The spheres also align with the theory of change in terms of the sequencing of results. Results being achieved directly by the project's activities fall into the spheres of control and influence. Results that evolve over time and more removed from the project's direct influence fall into the sphere of influence and the sphere of interest.

Results at outcome and impact level involve many more factors and actors than the project alone. However, applying the Three Spheres framework can illustrate plausible linkages between the projects' initial influence and changes in the other spheres over time.

### **How to use the Three Spheres**

When the Pathways of change have been mapped in Step 6, use the Three Spheres to distinguish between parts of the pathway(s) that you can control or influence, and parts that are beyond your influence.

Apply the Three Spheres model to your project pathways:

- Which part of the pathways, which anticipated results, are within the control of the project or partnership? Why?
- Where is the point that the anticipated results concern the use others are making of the project's outputs, or their response to them? Is the assumed link of that outcome with the project output direct, or indirect? Why?
- Discuss the time perspective: how long do we think that it takes to achieve a specific result? What does that mean for the planning of the project, the results that realistically might be achieved, and the formulation of the project objectives?

Spheres can be represented in different ways in ToC visualisations, for example by dotted lines in drawings made during the ToC process, or by using different colours in the visualisation of a ToC product.

In Step 7 (MEL priorities and process), the Three Spheres are helpful to clarify whether the intended results are at output, outcome or impact level. Using the spheres also helps you to identify areas of enquiry to monitor, how and when. The time-line aspect of the spheres helps in the selection of appropriate indicators for the project's time frame.

## NECESSARY & SUFFICIENT

The 'Necessary and Sufficient?' exercise can be used in Step 5, the Pathways Mapping. This exercise helps you to check the change logic of your pathways. The exercise has two aims:

- To identify and address any overly large leaps in the pathway, where the influence of one change on another has not been fully thought through;
- To streamline the pathway by eliminating any unnecessary changes.

Each change in a pathway influences others around it in different ways. These linkages are often referred to as 'causal relations'. Check the flow of your pathway by taking each change and ask two questions:

- Is this change/condition/result **necessary** for the next one to happen?
  - If it is not, then the change can be removed.
- Is this change/condition/result **sufficient** for the next one to happen?
  - If it is not, then consider what additional changes and conditions are required to create sufficient change.

As you work through the questions, you could document why you think a change/condition/result is necessary and sufficient for the next one to happen. This contributes to identifying assumptions:

*'B cannot occur until A has happened, because [...]*

## INDICATOR SELECTION

Indicator selection is used in Step 7, developing the Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning approach. An indicator provides a marker of whether a certain change has happened or whether certain conditions exist.

There are many tools available for selecting indicators. Some commonly used criteria are presented in 1. Section 2 presents an exercise for developing potential indicators.

### 1. SELECTION CRITERIA FOR INDICATORS

Commonly used criteria for indicator selection are:

- **Relevant and Specific**

The indicator should be clearly related to areas in which the project is expected to make some difference. Factors and measures that are largely subject to external influences should be avoided. The relevance to the project should be clear, together with the reasons for wanting to monitor the change or factor.

- **Credible**

There must be a reasonable case for the view that changes in the selected indicators are related, directly or indirectly, to the intervention.

- **Unambiguous**

The indicator should be clearly defined, so that measurement and interpretation is unambiguous. For example: in '(improved) access to [...] services', the notion 'access' has different aspects (such as physical, financial, geographical, gender, class or cultural barriers): what will be monitored and measured?

- **Consistent**

Ideally, the same indicators should be measured over a long period, in order to track long-term processes. However: if an indicator is not relevant anymore, if the context, priorities or objectives have changed, or there are important unexpected effects, it might be necessary to revise or replace the indicator.

- **Sensitive**

Means that there is a short reaction time to change: the quicker results lead to change in the indicator, the more useful it is for monitoring. For example: the outcome of elections that are held once every 5 years is not a very sensitive indicator for changes in the political force field.

- **Easy to collect**

An important selection criterion is whether it is feasible to collect information on the indicator(s) within a reasonable time and at a reasonable cost. Monitoring of information that is too difficult, time-consuming or costly to collect, will in practice quickly be dropped.

### 2. RELEVANT & MEASURABLE<sup>8</sup>

This exercise can be used to quickly identify with a group some potentially good indicators for a specific outcome. Please note that more is needed to develop a consistent set of appropriate indicators for the MEL framework of a project or programme.

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<sup>8</sup> From: MDF Training & Consultancy, Ede, The Netherlands

This exercise helps people to think about indicators in a light and simple way. It also effectively conveys the message that the relevance of an indicator is the first selection criterion. Measurability is important but meaningless if it does not tell you what you need to know.

Procedure:

1. Choose the outcome for which a meaningful indicator is sought.
2. Brainstorm with the group what observable changes or signs would indicate that the outcome has been achieved, or is starting to materialise. List the suggestions on a flipover. Make sure you leave some room at the right hand side of the list.
3. If necessary, challenge the group to think deeper, broaden their perspective; maybe refer to different framings: how would the intended change look like for specific stakeholders?
4. When a considerable number of suggestions has been harvested, draw a table around the list with two columns on the right side (see example below).
5. The heading of the first column is 'Relevant', and the second one is 'Measurable'.
6. Go through the list for the first column and ask the participants for each suggestion how relevant the sign (= indicator) is for the outcome. Score it with x/x is very relevant, +/- is moderately relevant, -/- is not very relevant.
7. After finishing the first column, do the same for the second one: how measurable is each indicator? Discuss how it could be measured and by whom? How much time would it take for the change to become visible?

After completing the list:

8. Indicators that are not relevant or measurable, should be dropped immediately, as are indicators that are very measurable but not relevant. Indicators that cannot be measured by the actors involved in the project should also be dropped, except when the data are being collected by other, external actors and the project has access to that information.
9. Indicators that come out as very relevant and very measurable are probably appropriate and feasible to use. Indicators that are very or moderately relevant, but only moderately measurable, need more discussion to assess whether it makes sense to use them.
10. Review and discuss your 'harvest' and choose the indicator(s) that reflects the intended outcome best. If the outcomes bring you to new ideas, put them through the same test.

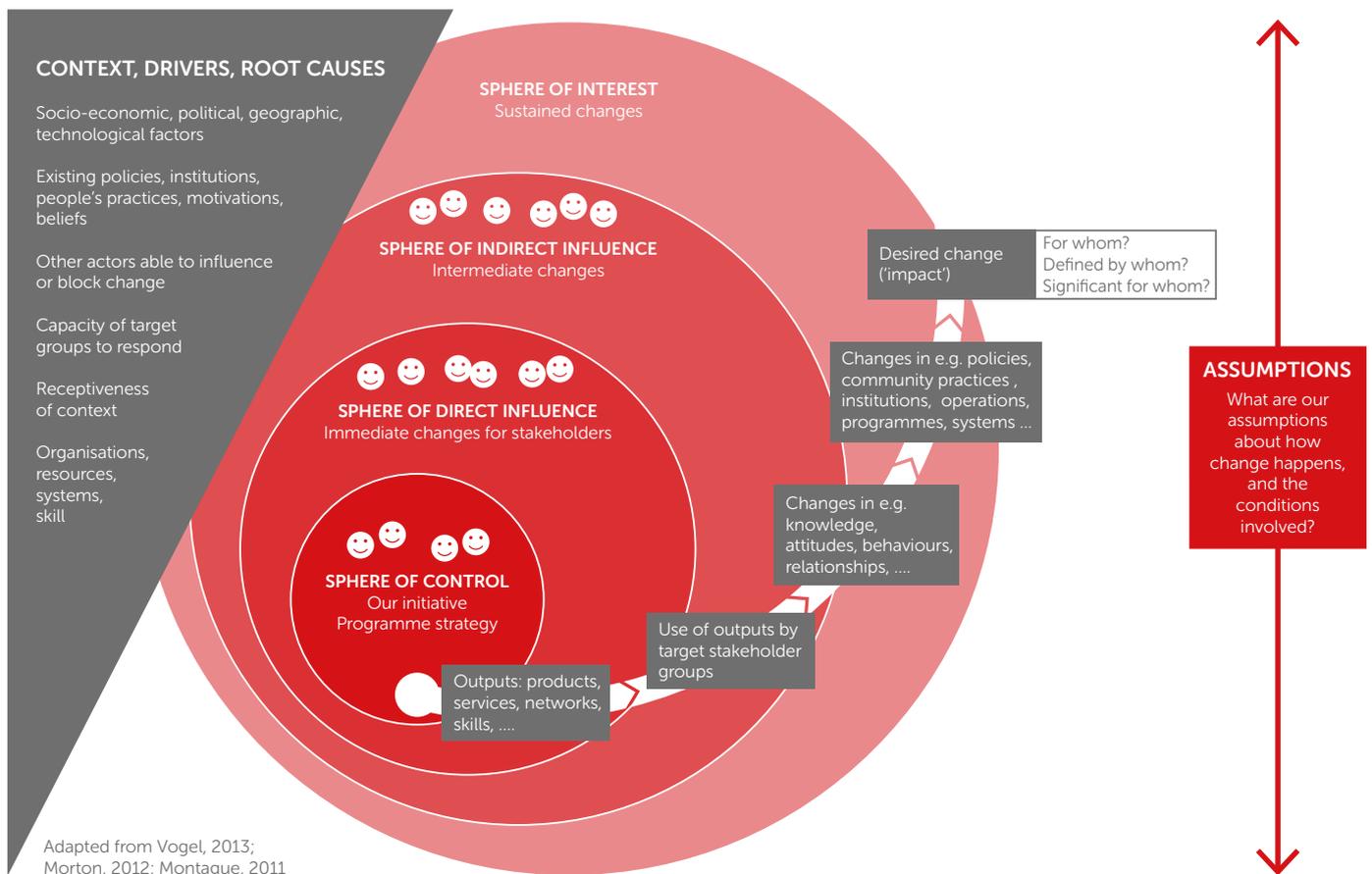
**TABLE 8: EXAMPLE OF THE EXERCISE**

SIGNS OF CHANGE	RELEVANT	MEASURABLE	
tuyreutiueyriy	++	++	good indicator
gfglfkglksg	+ -	+ -	questionable
nxbmvbmcxbvmbx	--	++	to be dropped
euwourtoeteow	++	++	good indicator
flsgjlkfjs	+ -	--	to be dropped
vnnvxnc	++	+ -	to be discussed
glfskdgfdg	+ -	++	to be discussed?

# VISUALISATIONS OF A TOC PROCESS AND PRODUCT

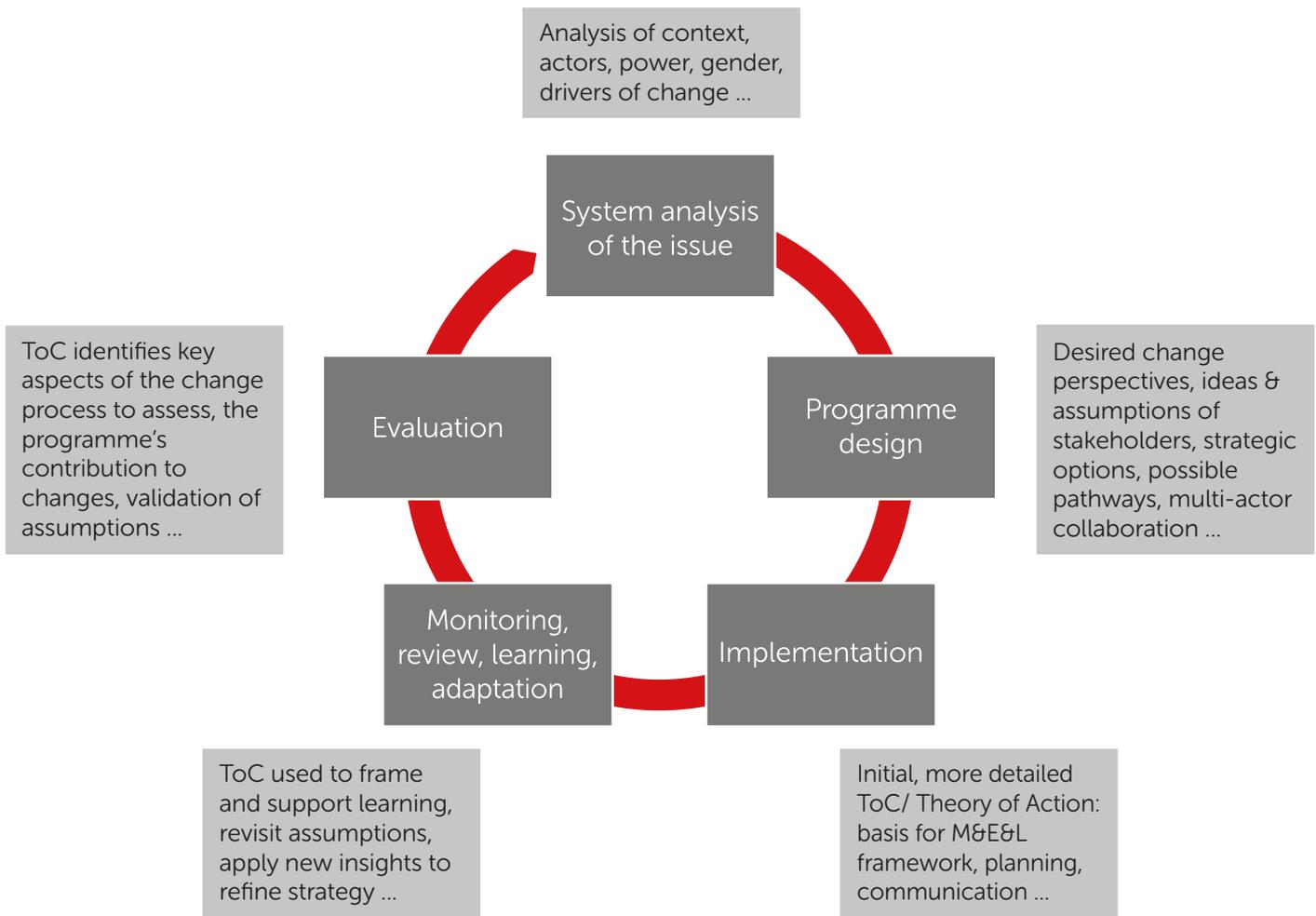
Sometimes a visualisation of the components of a ToC (other than the 8 steps) helps to better understand the whole picture. Here you find three examples.

## THEORY OF CHANGE ELEMENTS





## THEORY OF CHANGE AND THE PROJECT CYCLE



## 8.2 OTHER RESOURCES

- 1. CENTRE FOR DEVELOPMENT INNOVATION (CDI), Wageningen University and Research Centre**
  - Theory of Change Portal: [www.theoryofchange.nl](http://www.theoryofchange.nl)
  - Multistakeholder Partnerships Portal: <http://www.mspguide.org/>
  - Managing for Impact Portal: <http://www.managingforimpact.org/>
- 2. Theory of Change: A thinking and action approach to navigate in the complexity of social change processes.** Author: Iñigo Retolaza Eguren, 2012  
<http://www.theoryofchange.nl/resource/theory-change-thinking-and-action-approach-navigate-complexity-social-change-processes>  
(Also available in Spanish)
- 3. RESEARCH TO ACTION**  
<http://www.researchtoaction.org/theory-of-change-useful-resources/>
- 4. BETTER EVALUATION**  
<http://betterevaluation.org/>
- 5. IDS - PARTICIPATORY METHODS**  
Participatory approaches to programme design, monitoring and evaluation; to learning, research and communication in organisations, networks and communities; and to citizen engagement in political processes.  
<http://www.participatorymethods.org/>
- 6. KEYSTONE**
  - <http://www.keystoneaccountability.org/resources/>
  - <http://www.keystoneaccountability.org/sites/default/files/2%20Developing%20a%20theory%20of%20change.pdf/>
- 7. ANNIE E. CASEY FOUNDATION**  
A Guide to ToC work at community level:  
<http://www.aecf.org/resources/theory-of-change/>
- 8. From Poverty to Power**  
Duncan Green's blog on Theories of change offers useful insights:  
[fp2p@oxfamblogs.org](http://fp2p@oxfamblogs.org)
- 9. ODI Tools for Knowledge and Learning.** Ben Ramalingam, 2006.  
<http://www.odi.org/publications/153-tools-knowledge-learning-guide-development-humanitarian-organisations>



### **Managing group dynamics and energy**

- Groups form, storm, norm and perform.
- Conflict and confusion is always part of a facilitated process.
- It needs to be managed by a mix of surfacing, responding, agreeing what cannot be resolved, and offering ways forward.

### **Constructively challenging**

- Use questions to respectfully encourage groups to push themselves and stretch their thinking, for example:
  - ‘Have you thought of [...]?’
  - ‘What about [...]?’
  - ‘How would this look from a different perspective?’

### **Questioning/active listening**

- Promote self-awareness and awareness of others
- Is everyone listening, contributing, understanding, having an equal say?
- Are people connected with the process (group, task)?
- Encourage the group to co-facilitate their own dynamics.

### **Valuing what people are bringing and what is emerging**

- Create a context of care, support and trust by appreciating people’s input
- Check in individually and with groups or sub-groups about how they feel about the process and if they are getting out of it what they want and need.
- Avoid putting people on the spot in public.

### **Threading / summarising / sign-posting / recapping**

- You hold and own the road map! Keeping people focused, reminding them of where they are and where you are headed is a continuous task.
- Link ideas and insights to previous sessions – ‘threading’ relevant ideas together
- Signpost what sessions are coming up and the relevance to the current discussion
- Summarising what people have said is crucial for checking everyone’s understanding: ‘Am I right that [...]?’ ‘As I have heard you [...]?’
- Allowing time to reflect on conversations and to share reflections – the group’s and the facilitator’s – is helpful to gain deeper insights
- Allowing time for reflection and processing is vital in skills training.

## **RESOURCES**

### **International Association of Facilitators:**

<http://www.iaf-world.org/index.aspx>

### **The IAF Methods Database:**

<http://www.iaf-methods.org/>

The IAF Methods Database is a resource for facilitators, project and team leaders, and anyone using facilitating techniques with groups.

### **Dotmocracy Handbook:**

<http://www.idearatingsheets.org/>

Dotmocracy is an established facilitation method for collecting and prioritising ideas among a large number of people. It is an equal opportunity and participatory group decision-making process.





[www.hivos.org](http://www.hivos.org)

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