

Theory of Change

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March 9, 2023



Spark



OUTLINE

Introduction ToC

Components of ToC and Steps in development of ToC

Practice : Co-produce ToC map

Theory



- Theory ('reason-giving'), both informal and formal, is intimately woven into virtually all human endeavour
- There are three levels of theories: grand, mid-range ('big theory') and programme theories ('small theories')
- In many interventions the role and value of theory has been seriously under-recognized
- Although **informal theory** is always at work in improvement, practitioners are often not aware of it or do not make it explicit

Theory of change (ToC)

ToC is NOT

- A general theory that applies to a broader principle
 - “ is not a sociological or psychological theory such as Complexity Theory or the Theory of Planned Behaviour, but a pragmatic framework ,which describes how the intervention affects change” De Silva et al. (2014, p. 2)

ToC is

- **Is task specific**
- Is a ‘hypothesis driven’ Process + Product



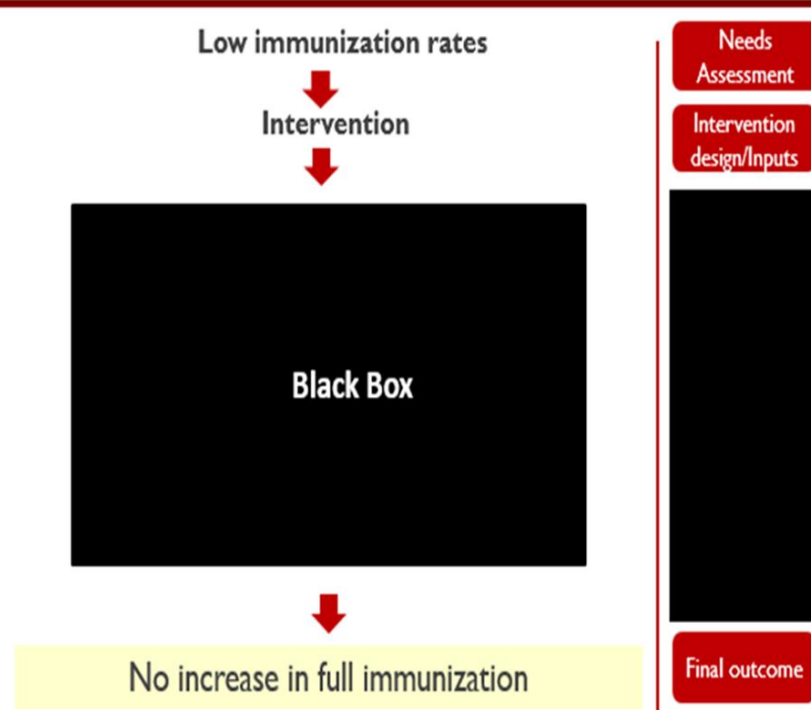
What is Theory of Change (ToC)?

- There is still diversity in precisely how a ToC is defined
- a 'ToC' as a theory of how and why an initiative will work (Weiss, 1995)
- Every program is packed with beliefs, assumptions, and hypotheses about how change happens – about the way humans work, or organizations, or political systems. Theory of change is about articulating these many underlying assumptions about how change will happen in a program
- *“on-going process of discussion-based analysis and learning that produces powerful insights to support PRogramme design, strategy, implementation, evaluation and impact assessment, communicated through diagrams and narratives which are updated at regular intervals” (Vogel, 2012)*

What is the importance ToC?

What is the importance ToC ?

Solving the Black Box Problem



Design/strategy

- brings in diverse sources of understanding and open up “black box” in thinking through explicit causal pathways.
- A range of assumptions may underlie the design of your project or approach.
- The ToC process should reveal these hidden assumptions, some of which you may then discover are unfounded, out-of-date or inconsistent with the evidence.
- Help to systematically think through the many underlying and root causes of complex challenges and how they influence each other

What is the importance ToC ?



Participatory process /Engage stakeholders

- Serves as a basis of an agreement (buy-in) and a means for developing and managing partnerships and partnership strategies:
- Accommodate the views and assumptions among Programme planners, beneficiaries, donors, Programme staff, etc.
- Clarify roles and responsibilities, achieve a shared understanding of an intervention and outcomes
- Develop ownership
- Builds a local knowledge base and collective change ethic that makes implementation of the reform more likely

What is the importance ToC ?



Communicate:

- ToC is the basis for more effective and unified communication: articulate shared vision and strategy for how change can happen;
- Serve as a roadmap/ a framework for learning both within and between PRogramme cycles
- Stakeholders are asked to be clear about their assumptions
- A ToC diagram is a neat way to summaries work and communicate it to stakeholders, including funders and commissioners

What is the importance ToC ?

Measure:

- Ensure indicators of success are in place for later evaluation
- Allows to distinguish between implementation failure (not done right) and theory failure (done right but still did not work).
- Creates a safe place to be reflective and makes evaluation of these plans more rigorous and timely

Components of ToC ?

ToC may differ greatly between different organisations,
However, there are some elements that are common to many theories of change.

1. Long-term Impact
2. Outcomes and preconditions, molded in causal pathways
3. Interventions (activities) leading to the relevant outcomes
4. Assumptions
5. Rationales
6. Indicators
7. Presentation: Diagram & Narratives

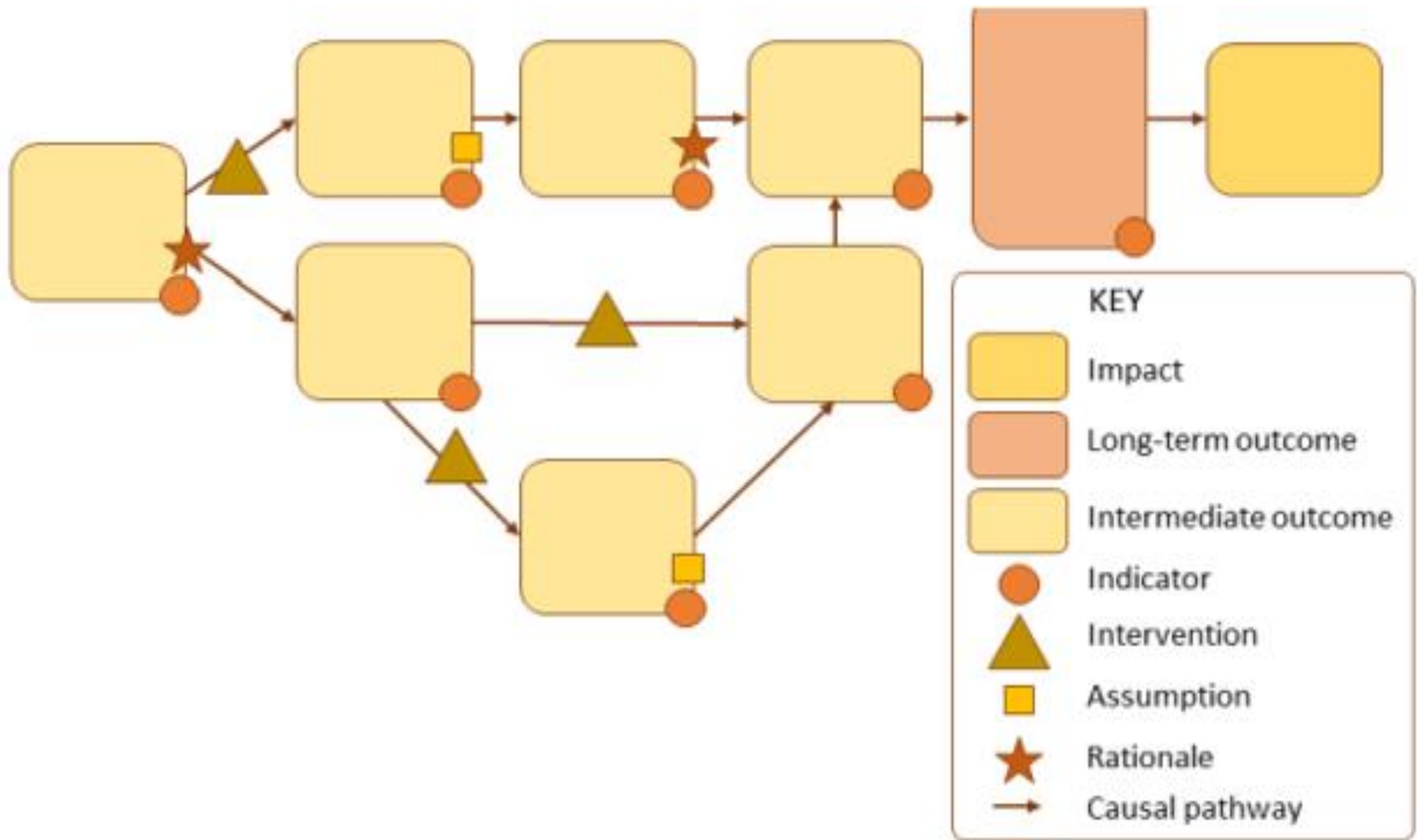
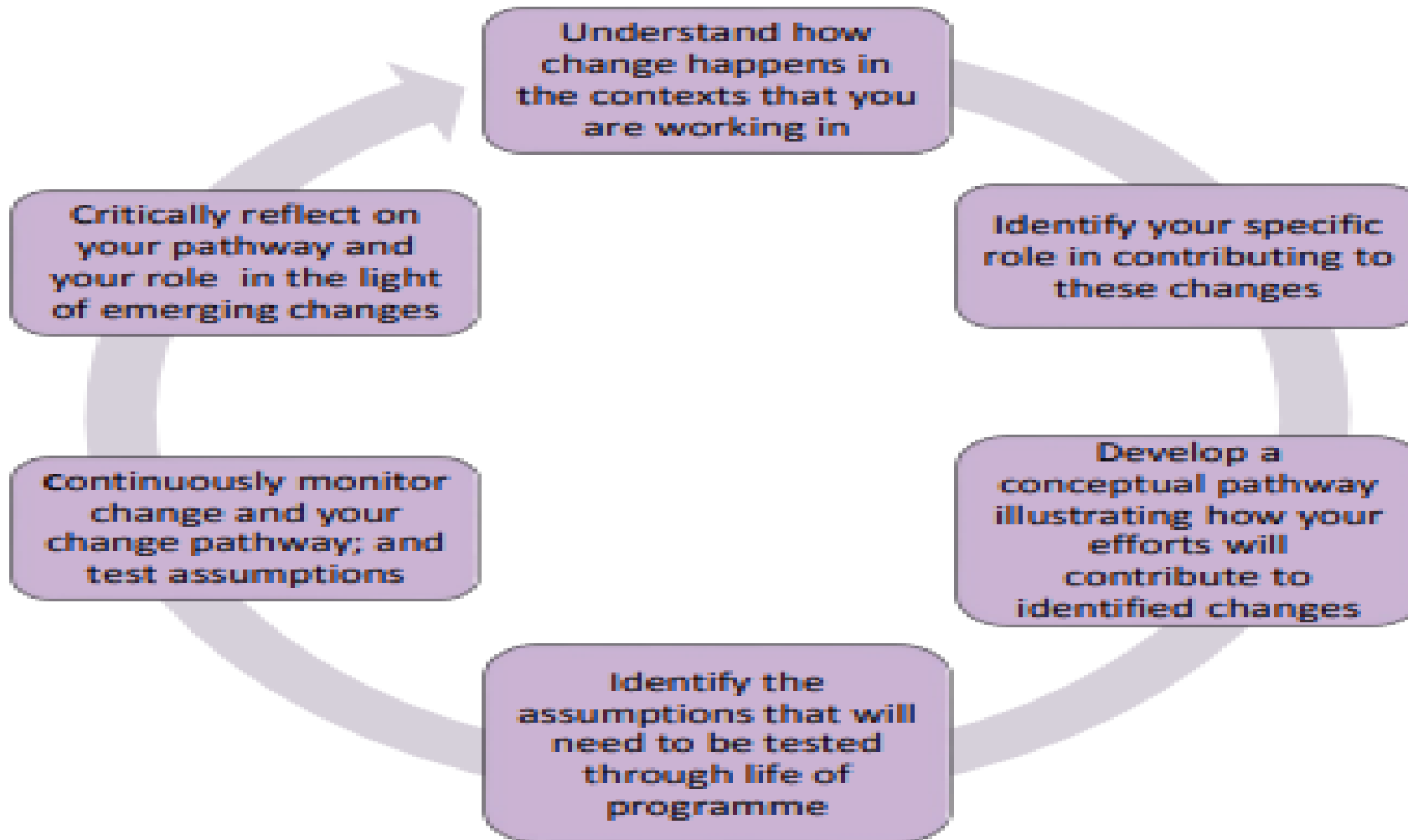


Figure 1: Example Theory of Change framework and key

Steps in development of ToC ?



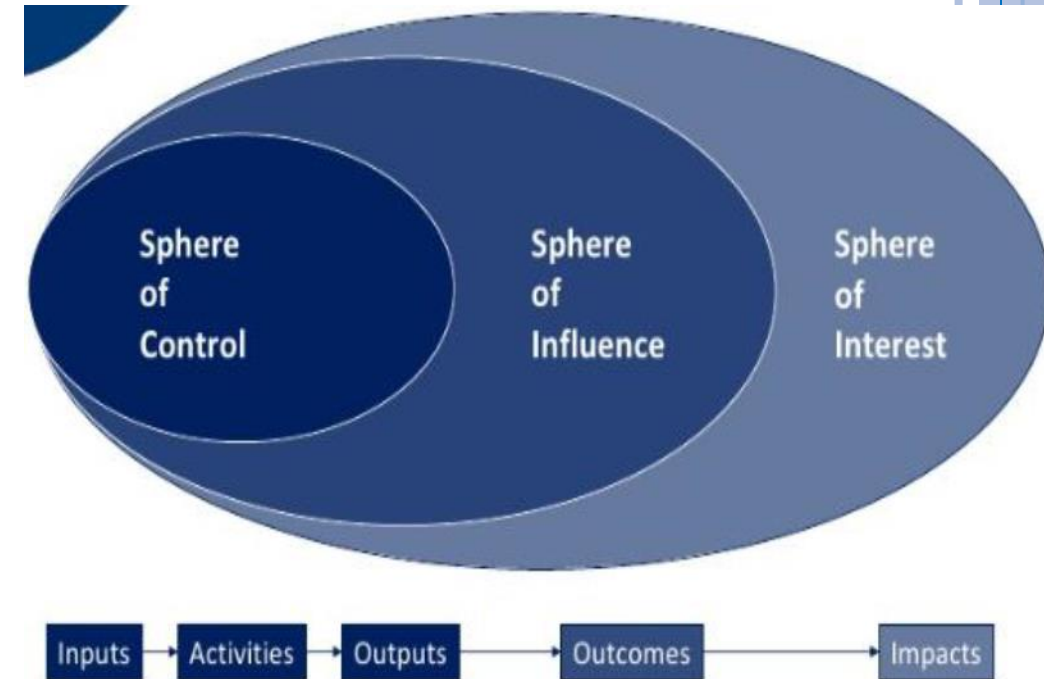
Steps-1: Setting context and vision

Why
information on
problem and
the root cause
of the problem?

- Defining the Problem and root causes, understanding the context are the starting points for creating a ToC.
 - ✓ To illustrate a pathway to address the problem, identify the strategies and select the most effective solution
- Data and information that supports the identified problem, root cause, and target population
- Consensus from the stakeholder

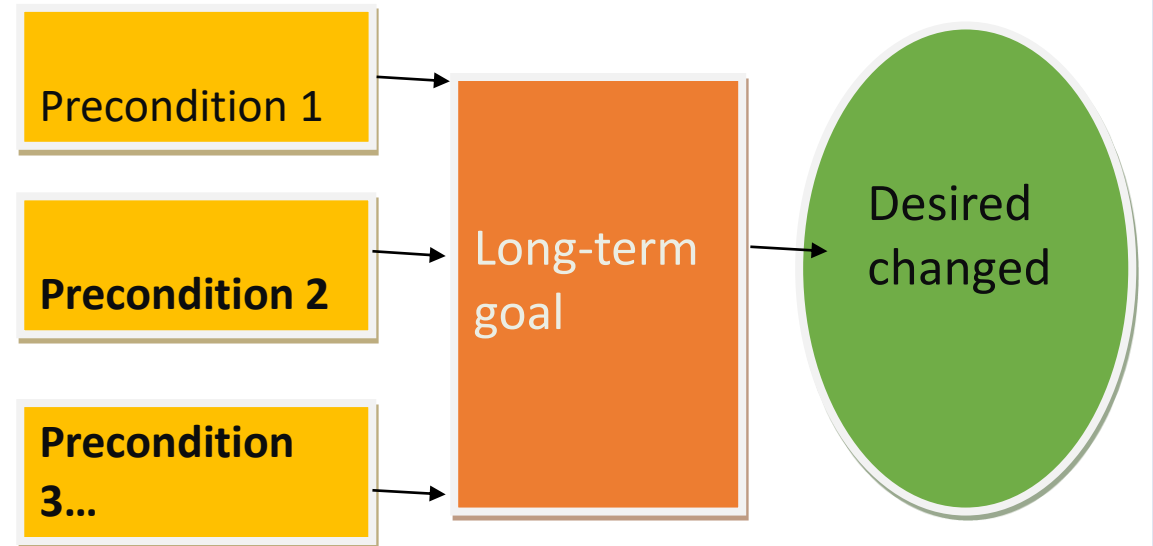
Steps-2: Identify Role of Related Partners

- Clearly define your target groups: the people or institutions you aim to work with, their characteristics and needs.
- Help to better understand sphere of influence
- Identify partnerships, through which sphere of control or influence might be expanded
- where working together is expected
- Where collaboration is necessary to achieve the expected change
- How to avoid overlapping to maximize the use of available resources



Steps-3: Developing conceptual pathway

- Define the impact(desired change)
- Identifying and start with well defined long-term goal
- Conduct a backward mapping to identify and define the preconditions (intermediate outcomes) needed to achieve this long-term goal
- Starts with asking “what preconditions must exist for the long-term outcome to be reached?” rather than starting with the question: “What can we do to bring the outcome about?”



Intermediate outcome

Long-term outcome

Impact

Improved resource and social mobilisation;
3, ii, j

Improved financial support

Improved relationship and social support;
9,2, xii,h, b

Reduced public stigma

Improved quality of life

Mortality

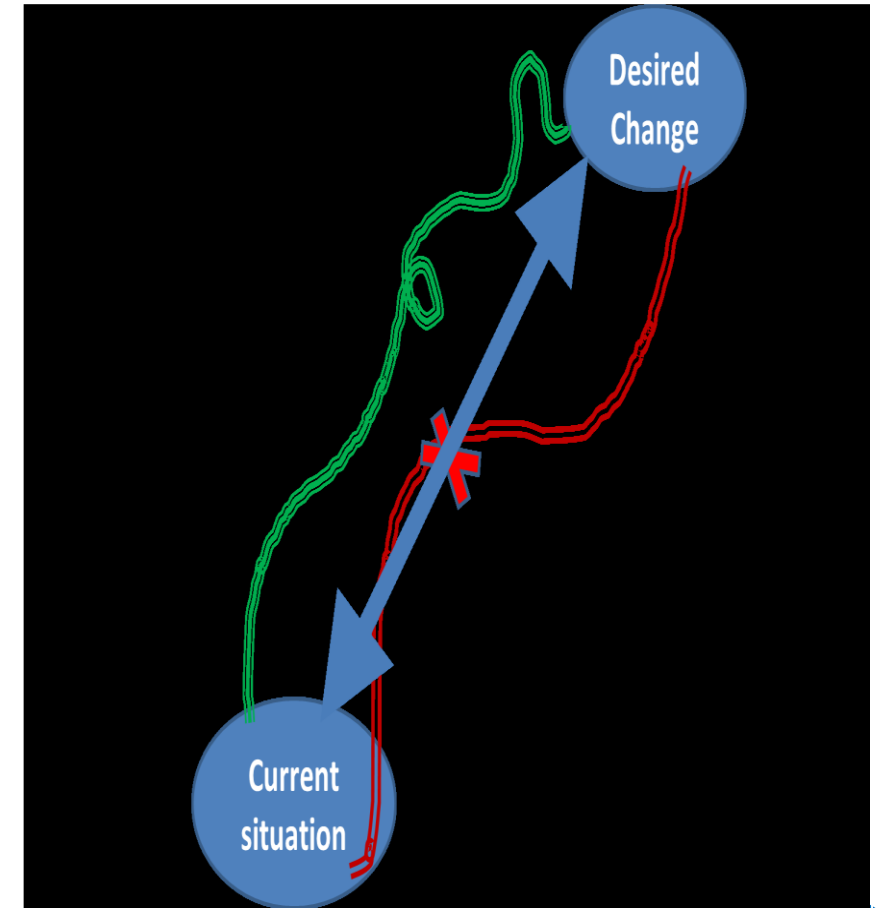
Steps-3: DEVELOPING CONCEPTUAL PATHWAY

- Specify the activities, mechanisms and indicators that make outcomes more likely
- ✓ State what you are doing or plan to do to encourage the outcomes to happen
- ✓ For every outcome that **can only occur if you do something**, specify the intervention needed
- ✓ Make explicit indicators: How we know outcomes achieved

Steps-4: Make assumptions and risks explicit

Assumptions

- The underlying beliefs about how a project will work, the people involved and the context
- Explain the logic behind the overall programme and causal links : “why do we think change will happen?”
- Clear underlying assumptions, the causal linkages between the different variables, outcomes that may determine the expected change.*



Steps-4: Make assumptions ...

- Map the sequence in which change might (inputs, activities, outputs, outcomes) and summarize it in a diagram

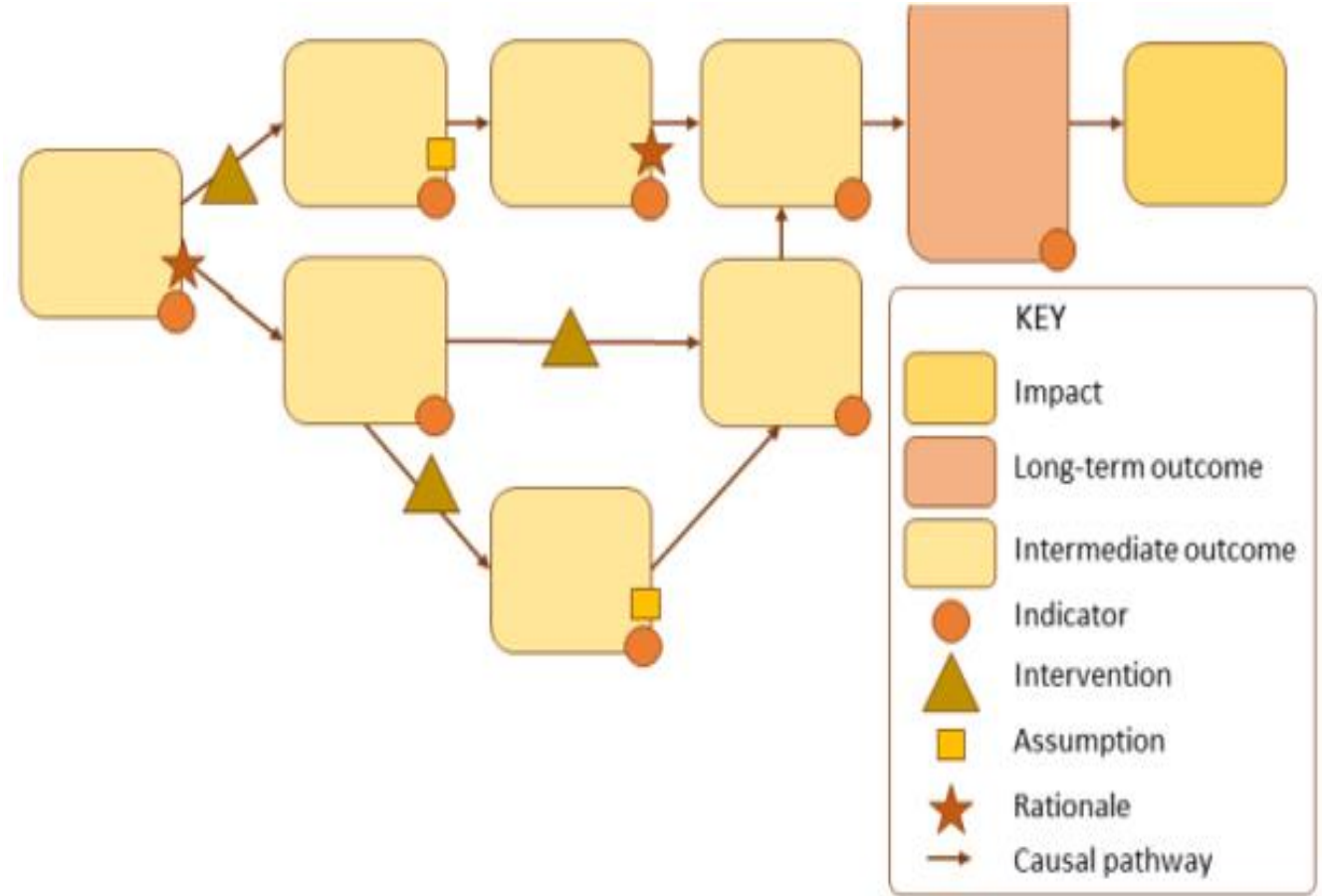


Figure 1: Example Theory of Change framework and key

Steps-5: Assess the validity of the theory of change

- There is no 'perfect' example, as all theories of change should vary depending on the views of those involved in its development, the context and nature of the intervention, and the purpose for which the theory of change has been developed.
- However, **there are some core criteria which a theory of change should meet** in order to optimize the usefulness of the product in communicating an overview of the intervention and the thinking behind it to an external audience.



Steps-5: Assess the validity of the theory of change

A good Theory of Change should be:

- **Plausible:** present clear logical pathways from the intervention outputs through outcomes to the long-term goal, and show these are necessary and sufficient to achieve the eventual global benefits
- stakeholders believe the logic of the model is correct: if we do these things, we will get the results we want and expect.
- **Is it doable/feasibility?** This is about availability of all resources(human, economic, political) to carry out the initiative.
- **Testable:** This is about clearly outlining measurable indicators of change through the pathways, and points where the causal logic in the ToC might be reviewed
- Is the theory of change sufficiently specific and complete for an evaluator to track its progress in credible and useful ways?



Steps-6: Report: Diagram and Narrative

Data: come mainly from the

- workshops and meeting minutes
- ToC maps developed during the workshops.
- Audio-recorded and taking notes are very important.



Steps-6: Report: Diagram and Narrative

- The visual representation that shows the different steps of the pathways of change, how they relate to each other, as well as how they are interlinked.

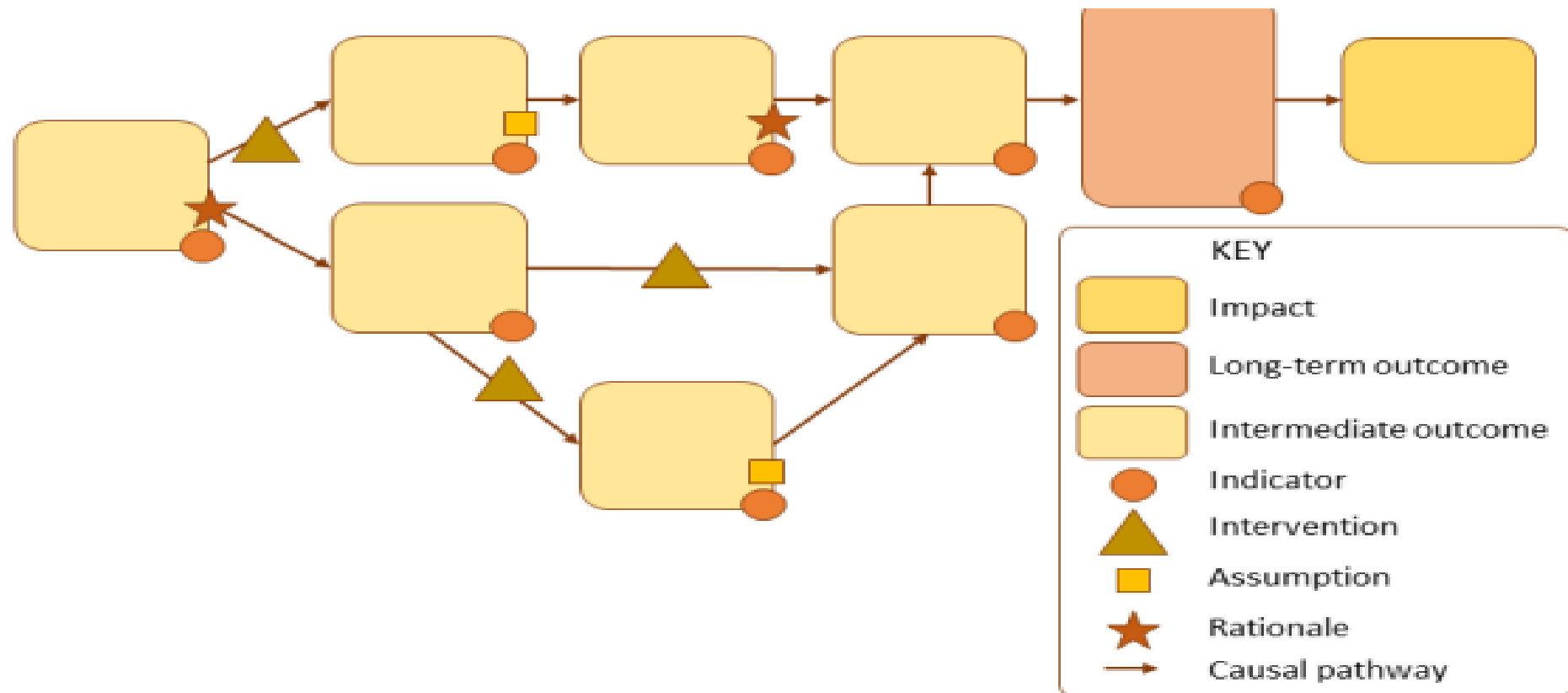


Figure 1: Example Theory of Change framework and key

Steps-6: Report...

A narrative should include: description of

- **The process** by which the theory of changed was developed (and who was involved, and how)
- **intended impact**
- **need and context** for the intervention
- **outcomes leading up to the impact**
- **outputs** – how your work will bring your intended outcomes about (inputs – human, material or financial resources – here too)
- how you will work with **other actors**
- reference to **timelines** – when you think things will happen
- **critical assumptions**, and how you will measure them

IN CONCLUSION,

- **ToC** should answer the following big questions:

1. Who are you seeking to influence or benefit (target population)?
2. What benefits are you seeking to achieve (results)?
3. When will you achieve them (time period)?
4. How will you and others make this happen (activities, strategies, resources, etc.)?
5. Where and under what circumstances will you do your work (context)?
6. Why do you believe your theory will bear out (assumptions)?

ToC FOR CHILDREN WITH DEVELOPMENTAL DISORDER

1. Where are we now and where do we want to be/go (context)?
 - a. Problems identified, opportunities and challenges
2. What do you want to achieve/ see in the long run for children with developmental disorder?
3. What are Short-, medium- and long-term outcomes that you want to achieve?
4. What type of interventions/ activities are needed to achieve those outcomes?
5. Which activities should be done first and last, and why?
6. Why do you believe that the intervention / the program will work (assumption)?
 - a. Is there any evidence, experience
7. How do you know that you achieve the outcomes (indicators)?

Thank you very much !