Worksheet: Theories of Change

Objectives

- Clarify assumptions that underpin the realization of outcomes and results chain.

- Help teams, organizations, partners, and communities build a common understanding of the purpose of the intervention, and to work together in realizing them.

- Design a living document that serves as an instrument to guide other M&E elements.

- Create a mirror to review, rethink, and revise interventions at strategically or operationally opportune moments.

Initial Considerations

☐ Have you undertaken a context analysis—including a needs assessment, stakeholder identification and analysis, conflict analysis, and environmental and social impact assessment—to inform your theory of change?

☐ Define the ultimate objective of your intervention.

☐ Identify intermediate objectives (outcomes) you can contribute to or influence that would affect the ultimate change you would like to see.

☐ What kind of activities are you planning, and how should they be ordered or arranged?

☐ What is the timeframe of your intervention? This may be defined by a funding window or donor.

☐ At what level(s) does your intervention seek to affect change? For example, you may seek change at the level(s) of the community, municipality, state or country, region, or the international sphere. This will affect how you frame and communicate your theory of change.

☐ Are you developing your theory of change for a single project or for a group of projects/program? Do you need to create multiple theories of change, one (or more) for each project?

- [ ] What is the best way to communicate your theory of change, considering the various stakeholders and their needs? Do you need multiple models?

- [ ] Where are there gaps or leaps in logic? Where are there assumptions (and accompanying risks if the assumptions do not hold)?

- [ ] How can you make explicit the connections between the environmental aspects of your intervention and the peace or conflict-related aspects? What are the pathways connecting environment and peace?

- [ ] Do you need more information to complete your theory of change?

Participation

- [ ] Who are your key stakeholders, and how can they be involved in developing the theory of change? Identify stakeholders to consult and a process for doing so, taking into account:
    - Cultural considerations
    - Gender considerations
    - Possible spoilers

- [ ] Have you asked stakeholders to review and validate your theory of change?

- [ ] Remember to be conflict-sensitive and inclusive!

- [ ] Make a plan for clarifying and managing expectations during consultations. Some stakeholders might feel that their participation in the process of developing a theory of change guarantees certain benefits or activities. Be clear on stakeholders' role in the process: Is it to promote buy-in? Simply solicit information?

Develop Risks & Assumptions

- [ ] How robust is the evidence for your theory of change? What do the peer-reviewed literature and gray literature say regarding risks?

- [ ] Have you identified key risks or assumptions that could influence or affect your theory of change?

- [ ] Are the potential effects of these risks significant?

- [ ] Is the probability and/or severity of these risks sufficient enough to warrant monitoring that focuses on the risks?

- [ ] What conditions and resources need to be in place to achieve your desired outcomes?

Other Considerations

- [ ] Have you shared your theory of change with key stakeholders?

- [ ] Have you communicated that you plan to adapt and refine your theory of change based on monitoring, evaluation, and learning processes?