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M&E Workshop for FY 17 Awardees

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# What is a Theory of Change?

A theory of change is a set of diagrams and complementary text that describe, in detail, how outputs from interventions interact with:

- the outputs and outcomes of other concurrent interventions and
- contextual conditions (environmental, meteorological, political and social)

to assure a series of changes to achieve the activity's purposes and ultimate goal.

# A Diagram or a Set of Diagrams

- A graphical road map that illustrates the pathways of change from intervention Outputs through a series of Intermediate Outcomes and eventually to the activity Goal.
- Conditions that are not addressed by the activity's interventions, outside the control of the activity, but necessary for hypothesized changes to occur.
- Contextual conditions and assumptions necessary for the desired changes to occur.
- Show how the Outcomes will be sustained.
- Depict the interventions that will influence population-level changes.

# The Complementary Narrative

A complementary narrative that:

- Clarifies or define the terms used in the diagrams
- Elaborates assumptions
- Provides evidences to support the theories of change
- Identifies other actors who are intervening or will intervene to produce Outcomes or Outputs that are preconditions in a TOC pathway
- Provides an explanation of how the activity assumes an intervention with a limited number of beneficiaries will result in population-level change.

**Do not repeat anything that is clearly illustrated and easily understood from the diagrams.**

# Why Do We Need a Theory of Change?

- To identify all the conditions that are necessary and sufficient to attain the goal, regardless whether they are within the activity's immediate scope or not.
- To explain the sequence in which the changes are anticipated to happen – beginning from the current situation.
- To state the assumptions (rationales and conditions) underlying the sequence of anticipated changes.

# Why Do We Need a Theory of Change?

The purpose of developing a ToC is **NOT** to add more interventions to your activity's DIP or scope



# Pre-conditions

- Pre-conditions are conditions that must exist in order for another condition to be achieved.
- The TOC includes all preconditions that are necessary and sufficient to assure that the following condition exists or can be accomplished.
- Certain pre-conditions depend on the actions that happen outside the project.
- Write pre-conditions as complete and measurable states.

# Pre-conditions

Pre-conditions can be categorized as:

- Outputs
- Outcomes
- Contextual conditions

# Interventions

An intervention is an action (transfer of goods, provision of services, training, organization of women's groups...) undertaken in order to promote a change necessary to reach the project's goal.

# Outputs

Outputs are direct products of interventions:

Outputs can usually be counted:

- One training session conducted every month
- 200 households receive a kilogram of seeds each season
- 8 consultations achieved
- 25% of beneficiary households visited each quarter
- All children vaccinated by their sixth month

# Outputs

The theory of change should include all of the activity's outputs as well all other conditions that must exist for the pathways to proceed to the goal – even if the conditions are not affected by the activity actors.

# Outcomes

- Outcomes are conditions that result in directly from the outputs of the activity's or others' interventions or from other changes in the context
- Results do not happen immediately after an intervention. They depend on more than the actions of activity personnel. They require changes in knowledge, behavior and attitudes or evolutionary change in the environment.

# Outcomes: Examples

- **Households have income sufficient to meet their needs** can be an outcome that follows the use of skills developed through a training program (an output).
- **All men and women know the optimal practices for feeding infants** can be that follows the training sessions with mothers and fathers (outputs).
- **An increase in the use of health services** can be an outcome of increasing the number of trained personnel at health centers located near the target communities (output).

# Contextual Conditions

Contextual conditions are not affected by the activity. Instead they may affect the activity's outcomes.

For example:

- Outputs of others' interventions
- Rainfall (timing and quantity)
- Prices of basic commodities
- Level of conflict

# Assumptions

Assumptions are conditions that are not affected by the project but that must exist so that the conditions and pathways depicted in the theory of change are possible.

# Assumptions

A condition that the activity seeks to influence is not an assumption. For example, the willingness of beneficiaries to change behavior and the level of people's interest in participation in activities are not assumptions.

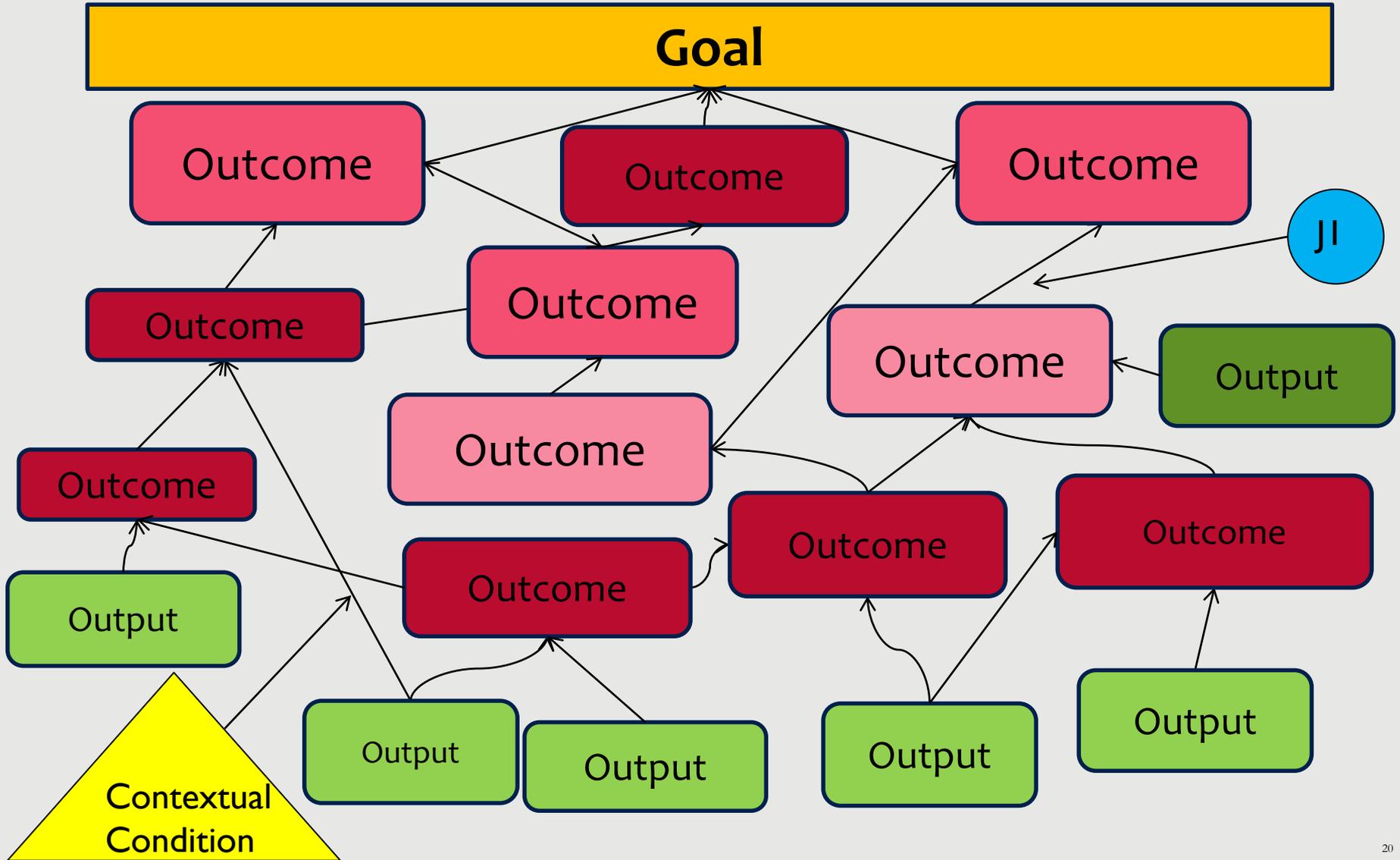
# Assumptions

- Assumptions are usually shown on the TOC diagram using a specific symbol.
- Some assumptions can be shown on the TOC diagram as external outcomes or outputs.
- Instead of describing an assumption, the TOC may use a reference to direct the reader to complementary text that details the assumption.

# Rationales

- Rationales present evidence that corroborates that a condition or set of conditions are necessary and sufficient for another condition to exist, for example references to reports of academic articles.
- The TOC diagram can show rationales in a unique symbol or use a reference to direct the reader to a detailed description in complementary text.

# A Simple TOC Diagram



# Pathway

A pathway

- is the series of related conditions that appear in sequence
- begins from a activity's output or a condition assured outside the activity's influence
- ends at the goal

# Example: A Linear Pathway



# Pathway

A pathway is represented with arrows that show:

- causal relationships among the outcomes, outputs, and contextual conditions
  - the order in which outputs and outcomes happen
- *Arrows can point in both directions.*
  - *A condition can be in multiple pathways.*

**What is a Results Framework?**

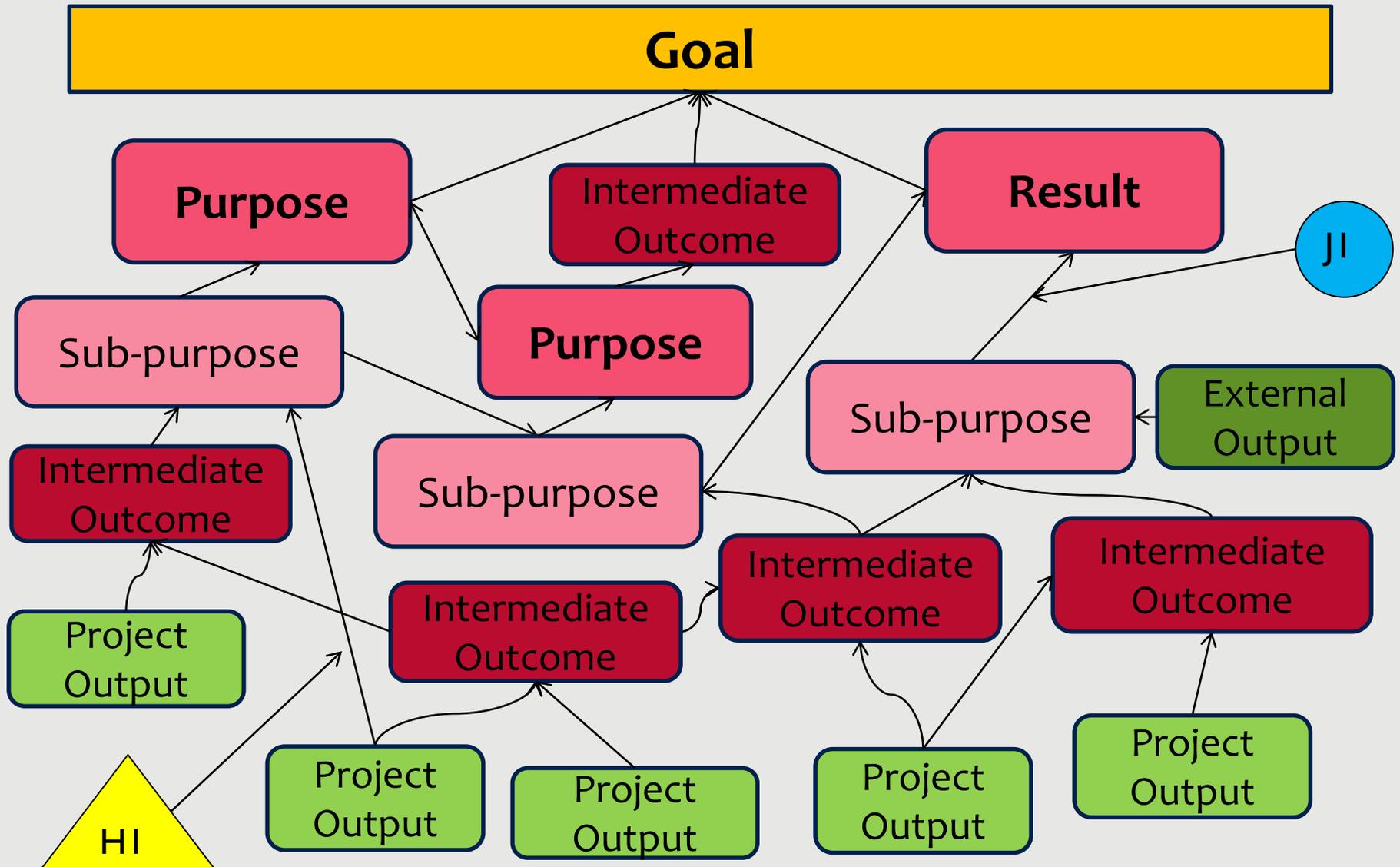
**What is the Difference Between a Results Framework and a Theory of Change?**

# Drawing the Diagram

To make the TOC diagram easy to read:

- Can be divided across several pages
- Distinguish the different components using shape, color or font.

# A Simple TOC Diagram



# Verifying the Diagram

- Are conditions stated and connected correctly?
- The combination of pre-conditions sufficient to assure the condition that follows?
- At each level, are all of the pre-conditions portrayed necessary?
- Are there pre-conditions missing?
- Are all of the causal relationships among the conditions in the TOC depicted?

# Verifying the Diagram

- Is there any gap in the logic in a pathway? Would the addition of more intermediate outcomes make the pathways more understandable?
- Is there any need to add a rationale to explain or justify the presence of a condition or to add to the credibility of a causal relationship?
- Does the diagram include all of the various project interventions' outputs?
- Does the diagram show all the necessary external outcomes and outputs?

# TOC Narrative

The TOC narrative can be used to describe:

- why the identified assumptions are important to the TOC and an evaluation of the possibility that the assumption will fail
- references to evidence that supports the rationales
- the contributions of external actors: who, when, how much, and the level of confidence in their contribution
- how the interventions that benefit a limited number of beneficiaries is expected to produce a measureable change at the population level

**Do not repeat anything that should be clearly understood from the diagram.**

# Resources

- USAID's Office of Food for Peace Policy and Guidance for Monitoring, Evaluation, and Reporting for Development Food Security Activities  
[http://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf\\_docs/PBAAF103.pdf](http://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PBAAF103.pdf)
- The Theory of Change Training Curriculum developed by TANGO International includes slides and a facilitator's guide. The facilitator's guide is available on the Food Security and Nutrition Network ([www.fsnnetwork.org](http://www.fsnnetwork.org)).
- ActKnowledge ToC Technical Papers – Taplin, Clark, Collins and Colby; 2013
- TOPS ToC Workshop Materials – TANGO: Frankenberger & Downen; October 2014
- [www.theoryofchange.org](http://www.theoryofchange.org)