Session Objectives

By the end of the session, participants will be able to describe the purposes and elements of a Theory of Change (ToC).
What is a ToC?

The ToC is a **diagram** and complementary **narrative** that describes in detail how a design team thinks their interventions’ outputs will interact with:

- other concurrent interventions and
- contextual conditions

to stimulate or enable a series of outcomes that lead to the intended objectives and ultimate goal.

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What is a ToC?

The diagram describes, **step by step**, the sequence of changes hypothesized to occur

- as the result of specific actions
- in a given context
- until all conditions necessary to achieve desired objectives are met.
What is a ToC?

The complementary narrative is used:
- to clarify or define terms in the diagram
- to present logical rationales with literary references for relations that are not obvious
- to further develop on underlying assumptions
- other?

The narrative should not repeat what is clearly understandable from the diagram.

Why do we need it?

- To identify all of the conditions necessary and sufficient to achieve a goal, starting from the current situation
- To clarify how interventions are expected to contribute to these outcomes
- To explain the sequence in which the changes are expected and need to occur
- To explain the assumptions (rationales and conditions) behind the sequence of changes
- To identify other interventions and conditions that are critical to assure all necessary conditions
- To recognize where there might be gaps
- To know what to watch for when monitoring progress.
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Simple ToC Diagram

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ToC Elements
- Goal
- Purposes
- Sub-Purposes
- Pathways
- Outcomes
- Outputs
- Assumptions
ToC Elements: Goal

- States the intended lasting impact to achieve in the target population
- Is worded as a measurable change.

Common goals of FFP development projects are:
- Improved food security in targeted areas
- Improved household resilience in targeted areas

ToC Elements: Purposes

Purposes are the conditions (relationships, behaviors, infrastructure, services, systems, institutions, laws, policies, etc.) that:
- the activity will address
- are near the achievement of the goal

*FFP development projects generally relate to the pillars of food security: food availability, access and use.*
ToC Elements: Outcomes

- An outcome is a condition that does not currently exist but must be in place for a higher outcome to be achieved.
- Outcomes should be stated as a measurable change.
- An intermediate outcome is a change that must occur between outcomes at different levels.
- The purposes and sub-purposes are intermediate outcomes.
- Some outcomes depend on actions and actors outside the activity.

As examples:

- **An increase in income** may be an outcome of trainees’ use of new skills.
- **Greater diversification of women’s diets** may be an outcome of kitchen gardens planted with a greater variety of vegetables.
- **More timely use of health services** may be an outcome of bringing services closer to home.
Interventions are actions (transferring goods or services, training, organizing, and supporting in other ways) with intent to promote necessary outcomes.

Outputs are the direct products or deliverables of interventions:

- Number of people trained
- Goods or services delivered
- Consulting sessions completed
- Households visited
- Groups or committees formed
- Infrastructure built

They often can be counted
ToC Elements: Outputs

The ToC must include all outputs from activity interventions as well as outputs from other interventions that are needed to assure that all outcomes depicted in the pathways occur – even if not undertaken by the activity actors.

ToC Elements: Pathways

- A pathway is the sequence in which outcomes occur, beginning from outputs of interventions and moving towards the goal.

- Pathways are depicted using arrows that show the sequence in which outputs and outcomes occur.
**Pathway Analysis**

- Households are more food secure (Outcome/Goal)
- Households have greater access to food to eat (Outcome/Purpose)
- Households food production increased (Outcome/Sub-purpose)
- Pest management strategies work
- Households plant a larger area (Outcome)
- The price of seeds falls (Outcome)
- Households buy more seed
- More villagers are visiting nearby markets to buy and sell
- More traders sell at the village
- FFA activities create a new road (Output)
- No major idiosyncratic shocks
- Continued access to irrigation

**ToC Elements: Assumptions**

- **Assumptions** are the critical conditions that already exist or are forecasted for the near future and that must continue in order to assure the achievement of results.

- The major types of assumptions are:
  - *Rationales*
  - *Global Assumptions*
**ToC Elements: Assumptions**

- **Rationales:** Evidence that justifies that a condition or a set of conditions is necessary and sufficient to produce the given outcome.

- **Global assumptions:** Fundamental conditions necessary to the success of the entire ToC, such as environmental or operational conditions out of the control of the actors but which must exist for the entire ToC to be relevant and work.

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**ToC Elements: Assumptions**

*Assumptions* may either be stated on the diagram and/or a symbol may be used to reference a statement in the complementary narrative.
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**Pathway Analysis**

- Households are more food secure (Outcome/Goal)
  - Households have greater access to food to eat (Outcome/Purpose)
  - Assumption: Local Govt. allocate adequate resources to implement safety net (Outcome)
- Extreme poor households participate in social safety net during lean season (Outcome)
  - Assumption: Extreme poor households have access to Govt. safety net transfers
- Local Govt. allocate adequate resources to implement safety net (Outcome)
  - Assumption: Mobilize local communities to demand for safety net allocation
  - Assumption: Organize seminars for Upazilla Parishad Chairman on the role of safety nets to strengthen resilience

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**Reviewing a ToC Diagram**

- Are elements connected and sequenced properly?
- Is it clear that the combination of outcomes on a lower level sufficient to lead to the next higher outcome? Are all of the outcomes in the pathway necessary?
- Is there any leap in logic along the pathway? Is there need to add a rationale? Are there outcomes missing on any level? Is there a need to insert an intermediate outcome to add clarity?
- Does the diagram include all of the outcomes and outputs that depend on others’ action?
The narrative can be used to further describe:

- the assumptions and why they are important, and to provide references to support rationales
- the contributions of actors outside the activity

It should not repeat what is clearly understandable from the diagram.

ToC Resources

- ActKnowledge ToC Technical Papers – Taplin, Clark, Collins and Colby; 2013
- TOPS ToC Workshop Materials – TANGO: Frankenberger & Downen; October 2014
- www.theoryofchange.org