



# Understanding Theory of Change

Amito Hellen Christine (PhD)

Consultant

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Training in Research Management For UVRI

# Definition

- *A theory of change defines the pieces and steps necessary to bring about a given long-term goal.*
- *A theory of change describes the types of interventions (whether a single programme or a comprehensive community initiative) that bring about the results hoped for.*
- *A Theory of Change is essentially a comprehensive description and illustration of how and why a desired change is expected to happen in a particular context.*
- *A theory of change includes the assumptions (often supported by research) that stakeholders use to explain the process of change.*

## Cont..

- *A theory of change:*
  - *demonstrates the pathway of how to get from here to there (i.e. what is needed for goals to be achieved)*
  - *requires underlying assumptions to be detailed out in a way that they can be tested and measured*
  - *puts the emphasis first on what the organization wants to achieve rather than on what the organization is doing*

*Source: Adapted from Theory of Change by Act Knowledge (<http://theoryofchange.org>)*

# Why Theory of change

- Provides feedback on whether a project, programme or strategy is 'on track' to accomplish the desired change and if the environment is evolving as anticipated in the project or programme design (Monitoring).
- Enables evaluators to ask hard questions about why certain changes are expected, the assumptions of how the change process unfolds, and which outcomes are being selected to focus on and why ( Evaluation).

In summary helps programme staff and evaluators understand what the project is trying to achieve, how, and why


# How does it work?

Maps out initiatives through 6 stages:

- 1) Identifying long-term goals
- 2) Backwards mapping and connecting the preconditions or requirements necessary to achieve that goal and explaining why these preconditions are necessary and sufficient – draw connections
- 3) Identifying your basic assumptions about the context.
- 4) Identifying the interventions that your initiative will perform to create your desired change.
- 5) Developing indicators to measure your outcomes to assess the performance of your initiative.
- 6) Writing a narrative to **explain the logic of your initiative.**

<https://www.theoryofchange.org/what-is-theory-of-change/>



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- To summarise, knowing what the theories of change are in projects and programmes can help monitor assumptions about how change is produced and guide evaluations to identifying to what extent the degree of success or failure is due to the programme design and programme theory and assumptions, or to programme implementation.

